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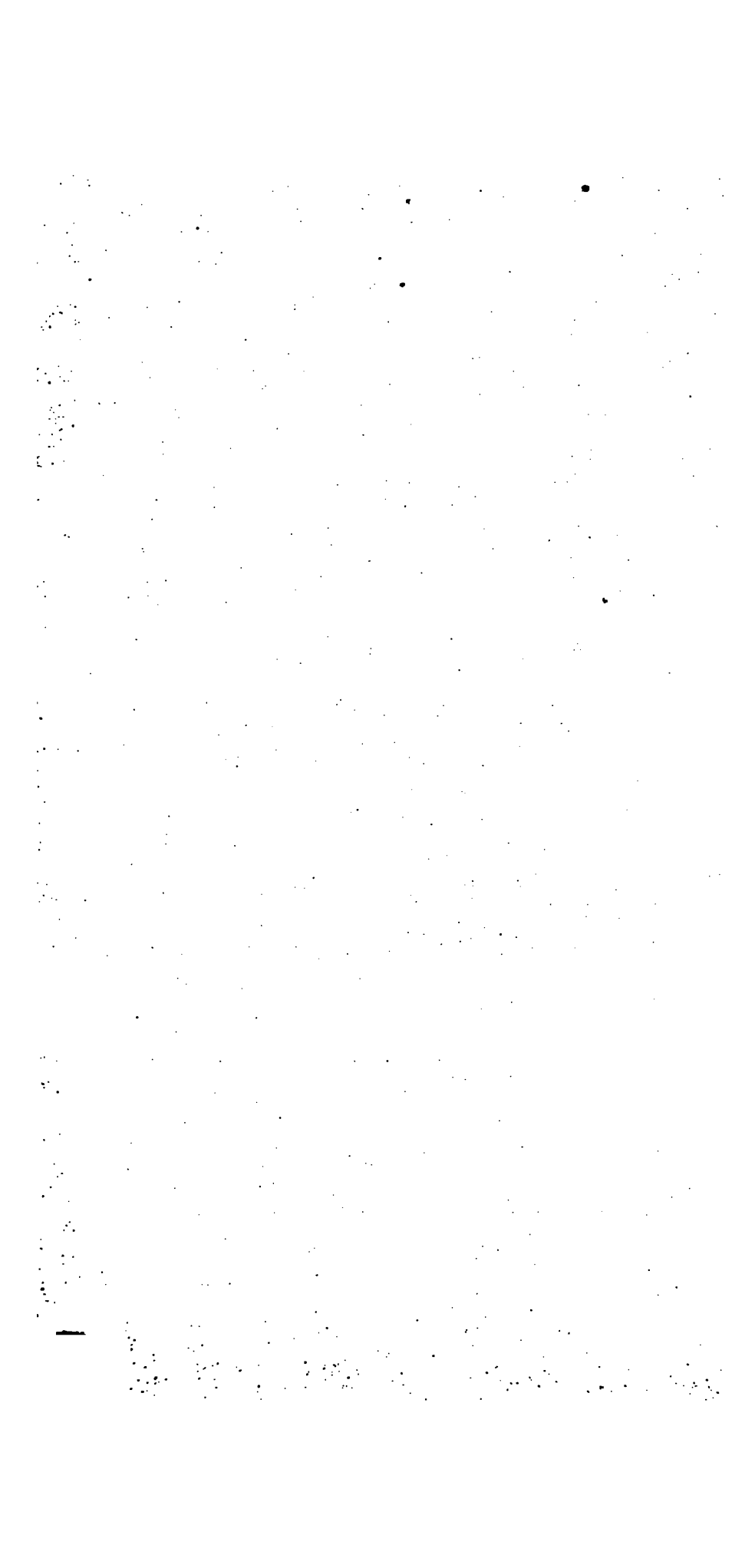
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THE  
LIVES AND TIMES  
OF THE  
MOST DISTINGUISHED  
CHRISTIAN FATHERS,  
TO THE CLOSE OF THE  
THIRD CENTURY.

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BY REV. WILLIAM H. COFFIN.

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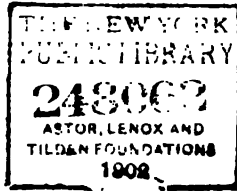
Thine eyes shall see thy teachers.—Isaiah xxx, 20.

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## P R E F A C E .

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CICERO says, to be ignorant of what happened before we came into the world, is to be always children ; and we may add, that the theologian who is unacquainted with ecclesiastical history, is a child indeed. The knowledge of Christian antiquity, while it gratifies a lawful curiosity, expands the thoughts, and brings in array before us, the stupendous occurrences of divine Providence. The church, in all her adventitious life, is seen guarded by an angel, that went before her in darkness and light, in adversity and prosperity, opening the door of heaven for Martyrs, as they finished their course ; and placing a flaming sword that turned every way, to guard the sacred records of which she was the repository.

But the fallible accounts of the church have been tossed upon the tempestuous ocean of time, until only a few, comparatively, of the many records of the early church have reached our shore, or have been made available to us. These come without a divine sanction, bearing the stamp of negligence, unfaithfulness, ignorance and superstition. It was once the complaint of the Latin church, that Laertius had written with more faithfulness the lives of philosophers, than any had done the lives of saints ; and he who now enters the field of Christian antiquity, must be careful that he does

not find himself very soon in the fairy lands of incredible legends ; or borne off, by such divergence from the paths of truth as later hands would direct, by the most ingenious interpolations. The ancient records deserve a just esteem and veneration, for they have brought to our day profitable information ; and are useful in bearing testimony of the fact, that there is a great difference between the apostles and uninspired men, and between the church under apostolic direction, and the church of more modern times.

The increasing importance of some branches of ecclesiastical history, to those who cultivate sound theological learning, or desire to judge of the true state of great theological questions, cannot be questioned, especially in the present state of church parties. The lives and opinions of the fathers, and the doctrines and ecclesiastical polity of the early church are differently regarded, according to the different theological creeds, and religious tastes and preferences, but all are now impressed with the truth that these important features of this branch of history, have much to do with the controversies which are now agitating the Christian world.

Those who regard the church as the source of religious knowledge, and the doctrines and rites which it holds as the revelation of God's will, co-ordinate in authority with the Bible, necessarily resort to the testimony which these subjects furnish ; while they regard the fathers in the highest sense, *Patres Apostolici*. To such, the early church becomes a true interpreter of God's will, and its history of unquestionable importance in ecclesiastical affairs.

The true Protestant looks upon the subject in an opposite point of view, regarding the opinions of the fathers, and the history of the church as having no other theological importance than as they serve to illustrate, in some sense, the sacred volume ; and demonstrate the difference between the

inspired writers of the New Testament, and the teachers who succeeded them. The importance of the subject to such is, that there is here found the germ of almost every controversy which has existed in the church; while it throws light upon the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and demonstrates that the Bible is the *only* safe rule of faith and practice. In these ancient records we see how the life-giving spirit of Christianity may be destroyed by formulæ, and the faith which operated with such power at first, become weakened by the dogmas of the Judæo-hierarchical school, or the subtleties of heathen philosophy.

It is interesting to trace those changes which passed over the church, after the days of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and to see how they took place, as the pastoral care of the flock was substituted by a monarchical episcopacy; and the spiritual teachers and church catechists became the supporters of a vain and deceitful philosophy. These teachers strove to excel all masters of the heathen schools by joining philosophy with Christianity, and thus caused the church to become corrupt, when heresies and divisions rent it asunder. During these times, the Pagan religions influenced all ranks of society, and the Grecian and Oriental philosophy, with the Gnostic and kindred sects, as their legitimate offspring, laid the foundation of many of those errors, which have retarded the progress of the Christian religion in the world.

The history of the development of Christian doctrines, and the ecclesiastical polity of the church, show what important changes have occurred; and the habits of distinguished teachers, as well as the rage of a persecuting world, display the manner in which some of the peculiar doctrines of our day were introduced into the church, with either a mere shadow of authority, or directly in opposition to the sacred writings;—such as the *intercession of saints*, the rigid

*asceticism* of the fathers, and the doctrine of *penance* ; with many others which may be traced to these sources.

Ecclesiastical historians furnish but scanty materials for a work upon the fathers. Eusebius has done much to preserve the works of those who lived before him in the church ; he had the advantage of the works of Hegesippus, Africanus' Chronology, the works of the several fathers, and the epistolary correspondence of the churches, retained in their archives. He collected the works narrating the martyrdoms of the churches, but the hand of the spoiler has obliged the historian to place them with apocryphal books.

Upon the foundation of Eusebius, Hierom, Nicephorus, and many others have built ; but the Magdeburg centuriators, headed by Matt. Flaccius Illyricus, explored all the ancient works of the church, and digested, with most indefatigable industry, the monuments of ancient ecclesiastical history, and produced a work, of its kind, of great ability. This work, although exceedingly imperfect in some respects, sets forth the corruptions of the church so clearly, that Rome thundered against it. A reply to it was prepared by Baronius, who, for thirty years lectured upon ecclesiastical history, in the oratory founded by Philip Nercus. The work of Baronius, has done more to make ecclesiastical antiquity favor the church of Rome, than any other ; it was the work of thirty years ; began with a view to defend the church against the centuriators, and elaborated with all the learning and care imaginable. Here antiquity was made like Rome, and both the sceptre and the crosier were forced to stoop to the triple crown.

In the older works on ecclesiastical history, there is wanting a more particular account of the rise and progress of opinions, and church usages, as well as a philosophical view of the external and internal causes. And although the most important changes were going on from Justin Martyr,

to the beginning of the fourth century, the impression from such works is, that what was true in the fifth century was equally so in the second. The German scholars of the present age have laid the foundation for great improvement in the investigation of the subject; they have scrupulously investigated every point, and facts have been brought to light which place it in quite a new aspect. A searching criticism has explored the sources of evidence, and the spurious works which were the authorities of older writers, are reduced to their proper level, and estimated according to their proper value. The concentrated light of the entire literature of the age has shone upon each point of inquiry, until a new and interesting character is given to every branch of ecclesiastical history.

But a knowledge of the fathers is not accessible to the general reader, being spread over a large surface, and that too, with a provoking reliance upon the classical learning of the inquirer; those only who have leisure and learning, make these subjects available; but it must be confessed, that all are greatly indebted to the sagacity of criticism, and the command of the literature of all ages, found in the recent works on early history.

The object here contemplated is, to bring the fathers to view, as they were prominent in the early church; to show their actions, that the reader may judge how far they are entitled to the character which is ordinarily ascribed to them. The part which they took in the great controversies of the early church; the serious changes which they were instrumental in making in ecclesiastical polity, and the doctrines which they inculcated, are all matters of moment, at this particular period, as many of these venerable teachers are called up from the slumbers of antiquity, to testify to innovations which were once an incubus on the church, but which a healthy reform enabled her to triumph over.



Fraught with so much interest to us as this subject is, from the peculiarities of the church in the first centuries, it is deemed important to contribute to the spread of this kind of Christian antiquity ; and diffuse abroad those *facts* which sustain the true Protestant doctrines, as a valuable treasury to all classes of religious readers. The opinions and actions of the Fathers, and the operations of Christian communities, being regarded as neither accidental nor inspired, but as springing from their life and spirit, as the elements at work in society were permitted to operate in their formation, they are presented to the reader without the bias of an improper *veneration* for antiquity on the one hand, or a disregard for their *legitimate claims* as *uninspired* instructors on the other.

BALTIMORE, *January*, 1846.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

## PROSPEROUS AND ADVERSE CONDITION.

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LIVES AND TIMES  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

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CHAPTER I.

THE STATE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

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WHEN we survey the strength of the established religion of the Roman Empire, at the time it was brought into competition with Christianity, we cannot wonder that the progress of the latter was looked upon as turning the world upside down. Temples on which succeeding generations had lavished the most extravagant expenditure, the pride and glory of the people, were to be destroyed; idols of the most exquisite workmanship and costly character were to

fall; pompous processions of public devotion, which brought occupation to the idle, excitement to the passions of the voluptuous, and engagement and amusement to all, were to be abolished; magnificent theatres, where power was obtained from the populace in proportion to their splendor and success, were to be brought into disrepute; and priests and artificers, who profited by the ignorance and superstition of the multitude, were to be deprived of their gains. Such were the strong holds upon the affections of the people, when the teachers of the religion of Christ went forth with the avowed purpose of destroying all the fabrications of Pagan superstition and idolatry.

No human invention could break up the system which the elements of the existing religion, among the Greeks and Romans had formed, by established usages, and national peculiarities. Hesiod and Homer, who methodized the confused traditions of their ancestors, and formed them into a system, fabulous it is true, and although the most fabulous of fables, they are so fascinating as to be far superior to any of the kindred creations of other nations. They conferred upon their mythology, all the grace, elegance, and beauty of their literature and philosophy, and, coming from such powerful minds, when put into practical operation, it threw a charm over all the arts and embellishments of human life. Homer made the world familiar with the hierarchy of the gods, and Socrates, Plato and Cicero, arose to all the sublime notions of deity which they possessed, by making good use of the works of their great master.

These fabulous creations gave to their costly and magnificent temples and statues of exquisite proportions, a speaking power, that threw a veil over the mind, while mythical and semi-historical tales, and rude but powerfully imaginative poems fanned fanaticism into a flame of enthusiasm. These things made a strong and enduring impression upon all social life, and formed so intimately a part of the political system, that it was impossible to separate it from the mass, but by agencies altogether unknown.

It was the policy of the Roman government to maintain closely, the state religion, for the permanent establishment of an individual character of the people, and the miserable superstitions of the day were seized upon to aid in carrying out that policy. Rulers evinced their consciousness of the fact, that when this power over the people was once destroyed, it could never be restored again. It is true, that there were many of the more intelligent who perceived, that in the traditional religion of the ancients, there was much that was false. The irresistible impulse of our nature, which continually drives an intelligent being from polytheism to one great Supreme, had lifted the veil, and led many to the discovery of those dreadful superstitions which chained their very being. But the great difficulty was, that this *one God* was the *unknown God*; the God of a philosophy, known to an initiated few only; and Plato only uttered the sentiment now so painfully experienced, when he declared *that it was impossible to find out God*; and *that when*

*you have found him, it is impossible to make him known to all.* There was a conception that a spiritual knowledge of religion of some character was attainable, but it was conceived to be the privilege of an initiated few only, and not the blessing bestowed upon all.

Even the best writers, and most discerning statesmen, fostered this state of things, and strove to maintain the piety of the people, by tolerating the most exaggerated tales, and justifying the most extravagant representations. Polybius, the great historian, plainly apologises for these things, for he says, "we must excuse some historians if they do relate miraculous stories;" and he defends the state in its excessive encouragement of superstition among mankind, against those who had been bold enough to oppose it on that account, when he says, "if a state could be formed of wholly wise men, perhaps such means would not be necessary. But as the people are giddy, and full of evil desires, there remains no other resource than to keep them in check by the fear of something unseen, and by terrors arising from this sort of tragic representation." It was the same with the geographer Strabo, who insisted that mythical tales and fables were needful for the people, and his doctrine is, "that the great mass of the inhabitants of cities are excited to good by means of agreeable fables; when they hear the poets narrating in a fabulous manner, the deeds of heroes; such, for instance, as the labors of Hercules, or Theseus; or the honors bestowed upon men by the gods; or when they see

these mythical events represented by painting or statuary, and they are deterred from evil by narrations or pictures of the punishments inflicted by the gods; for the great mass of women, and the promiscuous multitude of the people, cannot be held to piety by philosophical reasoning, but for that purpose superstition is requisite."

The great statesman, Varro, who saw the state of the times, drew a distinction between a philosophical theology, and a civil theology; the one grounded upon reason, for the philosopher, and the other on tradition and established usages, for the statesman and citizen. He evidently had a conviction that his *theologia civilis* was not suited to minds like his, and others of his day, but his fallacies suited legislators of the Roman people. If the *theologia philosophica* would conduct to a different result from the *theologia civilis*, there was no way of blending the two in the same man; so that the philosopher, who saw that the religion of the mass was absurd, must do as Plutarch describes him, who "feigns prayer and adoration for fear of the multitude, and he utters words which are against his own conviction, and while he is sacrificing, the priest who slays the victim is only a butcher." Such are the evidences that the system, which now prevailed throughout the Roman empire, could not bear the investigation of inquiring minds.

But a blind fanatical zeal, heightened by passion, concealed from the mass the absurdities and falsehoods of their faith, and made the employment of



means easy in the desperate efforts to uphold heathenism. It would soon have crumbled into atoms, from the discoveries of its corruption and weakness, but upon the introduction of Christianity, it was fortified by the addition of every device which the ingenuity of man could invent. Even to those better classes, who felt most deeply, the want of something more congenial to man's reason and feelings, and who sought in philosophy that knowledge which the existing traditions and superstitions could not furnish, there were presented mysteries and oracles; and these always called to their aid beautiful processions and joyous festivals, to gratify the love of grace and elegance; while the sensitive imagination was awed and captivated by the most superior display of the fine arts which the world ever knew.

The thinking and refined, who were disgusted with the established religion, betook themselves to the different systems of philosophy. Many felt that some system was necessary to raise man above the corruptions around him, and relieve him from the pressure of a corrupt and effeminate age. To such, *Stoicism* offered inducements. Here they received a high moral impulse, and the system soon developed many powerful spirits. It gave, at least, an ideal standard of perfection, which satisfied man that he stood above the vulgar horde in purity of life, although it allowed him to overlook his own baseness; and it was a relief to such as really felt the corruptions with which they were surrounded, especially as it taught a cold indifference to events.

Stoicism taught a belief in Saturn, a spiritual, universal existence, who originated all things, and into which all things must finally be resolved. Having the same divine life as Jove himself, the stoic only waited to be resolved into that universal soul from whence he sprang. Stoics believed that man was subject to the law of necessity ; and Seneca, who sometimes utters lofty things in praise of human liberty, nevertheless, says, "whatever happens, think that it ought to happen, and cast no reproach upon nature. It is best to endure patiently, what you cannot mend, and to concur with the Divine Being, by whom all things are directed, without murmuring. He is a bad soldier who follows his commander reluctantly ; let us receive the orders of our leader with cheerfulness, and execute them with alacrity ; and let us never desert the path marked out for us in the course of nature, because it is perplexed with difficulties." The doctrine, that man was to acknowledge God in all events, caused Zeno, the founder of this sect, to put an end to his life. At a very advanced age he was retiring from his school, when he fell and broke his finger, at which time, when he struck the earth to which he fell, he said, "why am I thus importuned ? I obey the summons ;" and, as soon as he reached his home, he terminated his existence.

Although the whole moral system of the Stoics was founded upon false notions of the nature of man, and is an extravagant and impracticable refinement, yet there is a purity and variety of doctrines belonging to

it, that made it desirable to a sensible pagan. The piety which it teaches is a quiet submission to irresistible fate; the self-command which it enjoins, annihilates man's best affections; and its moral doctrines of benevolence are bound up in the fanciful principle that every being is a portion of one great whole, from which it is impious to attempt a separation. The ideal standard which Lucian makes Cato measure up to,\* is the nearest practicable standard; and the whole system tended to create artificial characters, and encourage hypocrisy and moral affectation.

The Platonic philosophy, on the other hand, led to the consideration of a more spiritual religion, and tended in some sense, to prepare men's minds for Christianity. It taught that man's nature was akin to deity; it did not teach that it was something entirely independent of God, an emanation merely from the divine original; but it considered it capable of a preparation for a higher order of existence, and pointed to a higher state of being. Platonism taught, too, that man's religion was impressed upon his heart by a divine hand; and it impressed him with a kind of idealism, which, when brought into connection with the prevailing religion of the state, endeavored to defend it against infidelity, and purify it of superstition.

The latter Platonists attempted a purification of the

\* L. ii, v. 380.

soul by numerous unmeaning ceremonies, and magic formulæ ; and by striving to obtain a spiritual insight into another world, it awakened an intense indefinite desire after supernatural things, which it was impossible to gratify. The indefiniteness of this desire gave loose rein to the powers of the imagination ; and speculations almost endless, were forever looking into hidden things. This gave occasion for impositions, and a thousand inventors of delusions attempted to gratify the prevailing taste.

It was these prevailing impressions which fostered pretenders to supernatural powers. They were numerous in this age, and had an importance which they could not have had in a more advanced period. Alexander of Abonitichos was one of this class, and was a fit subject for the satire of Lucian, who wrote his life. This man's fame reached even to Rome, and he was consulted by all classes. His incantations, enchantments and pretended prophecies, gave him credit over all his opponents. Some of these characters, however, being better than Alexander, inveighed against the cruel customs of shows, and gladiators, and refused to give sanction, by their presence, to those wicked sports which were at the expense of human life. Such were Apollonius of Tyana, and Demonax of Athens. The latter told the Athenians, when they wished him to attend one of these shows of gladiators, that they must first pull down the altar of pity, of *ἔλεος*, which their city, more than all other cities, honored.

When the opponents of Christianity saw that these new opinions were supported by the most astounding miracles, and the purest doctrines, and that it was daily gaining credit, and likely to eclipse every inferior system, despairing of being able to uproot it by argument, or stop its progress by authority, they employed all their ingenuity and artifice to oppose it. Their own schools of philosophy were declining in credit, as their oracles had lost their power ; and to support them in their tottering condition, they resorted to the stratagem of incorporating Christian ideas and principles into a new system of philosophy.

The Eclectic sect took its rise in Alexandria in Egypt ; it was based upon the Platonic philosophy, and was composed of a mass of heterogeneous materials, collected together from all the other sects. The object was, to combine the truth of all systems into one ; but in the accomplishment of this object they gave to the world a shapeless and incoherent mass, *rudis indigestaque moles*. Alexandria became the reservoir of a great variety of philosophical and religious opinions, brought by the concourse of strangers, who flocked there from all parts of the world ; and the dogmatists of the Grecian schools, had, by their fruitless and undecided contests, laid themselves open to the Academics and Sceptics, their common enemies, while the latter held opinions which contradicted the common sense of mankind, and endangered the world with uncertainty, and confusion worse confounded. As D'Aubigné says, the world was totter-

ing upon its old foundations, and, by an acknowledgment of the men of these times, there was error in all the systems of pagan philosophy and religion ; but a last and mighty effort was made to save every thing that had the semblance of truth, that a system might be built up to the injury or exclusion of Christianity. They were willing to call any man master but Jesus Christ, and they collected a confused mass of opinions, occidental and oriental ; Egyptian, Pythagorean, Platonic, and Christian, which, about the close of the second century, formed the Eclectic system.

There was now, as might be supposed, a desire for something new ; some new revelation from heaven that would satisfy the inquirer, and relieve the distressing darkness and misery of the world. This led many to work in order to satisfy the inquiries which existed, among whom was the celebrated Porphyry. He collected together a number of old oracular responses, of which he says, "The utility of this work, those will best be able to estimate, who, feeling an anxious desire after the truth, have wished that some open vision of the gods might be granted to them, and set them free from their doubts." This man not only made pretensions to philosophy, but considered himself a divine personage, favored with supernatural revelations from the gods. He states that on one occasion when he was in a sacred ecstasy, he saw the Supreme Intelligence, who is superior to all gods. This vision, Augustine ascribes to the

devil,\* but it is most likely to belong to the numerous fictions with which his writings abound.

Numerous works abounded to show the state of mind which this condition of things produced, and which impressed the world with dreadful doubts and darkness, distressing to the soul of man. A work called the Clementine, a kind of philosophico-religious romance, pictures a man thirsting after truth among all the prevailing systems of philosophy, without success. Another writer, about the beginning of the first century, says of himself, "from the earliest days of my youth, doubts, like the following, which have come into my mind, I know not how, have constantly exercised my thoughts. After death, shall I exist no longer, and will no one ever remember me? Does infinite time thus drown all human affairs in oblivion? Then will it be as if I had never been born? . . . . . As I found myself harassed by these thoughts from my very childhood, I visited the schools of the philosophers, in order that I might have something certain to repose upon, and I saw there nothing but building up and pulling down of systems, strife, and contradiction." Such was the condition of the Roman empire when the teachers, who succeeded the apostles, began to spread abroad the truths of the Gospel. It was reserved for the religion of Christ to dispel this darkness, and cheer this desolate condition. Life and immortality were not brought to light by unassisted human reason.

\* De Civ. Dei, l. x. c., 19.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE STATE OF THE JEWS.

The Deplorable State of the Jews—Rabbi Jochanan and his Successor in the School of Jamnia—The Improved Condition—The Jewish Doctors—Jehuda Hakkadosh, the Author of the Mishna—The Gamara—The Cabbala—The Sects—The Pharisees—The Sadducees—The Essenes—The Alexandrian Jews—Philo—The *Exoteric* and *Esoteric* Doctrines—The Result—The Therapeuts—The Proselyting Spirit—Enchanters and Jugglers—Proselytes of Righteousness—Proselytes of the Gate.

THE Jews were generally in as deplorable a condition as the Gentiles. The devastation and ruin, which followed the conquest of Vespasian and Titus, reduced them to the lowest condition, and left them but few to transmit their ancient doctrines and usages to posterity. A part were scattered into Egypt, to a colony which had an existence from the time of Alexander; some to Babylon, where many of their brethren had remained from the time of the captivity, and where, according to Josephus,\* these refugees were received with humanity; but an inconsiderable portion were left in the desolated country of Palestine. "This unhappy people," to use the language of this great historian, "allowed themselves to be deluded by deceivers, who dared to lie in the name of God; like

\*Joseph. Bell. J., l. vi. Conf. Basnage, l. iii. c. l.



men utterly confounded, and as if they had neither eyes nor understanding, they heard nothing which God himself proclaimed." Their fallen condition, the distress occasioned by their subjection to the Roman power, together with the expectation of a temporal deliverer, blinded them against their true interest; and having no guides, their teachers were impostors, who only increased their misery.

There were, however, a few learned men left, who collected the scattered fragments of Jewish learning from the dreadful wreck in Palestine, and Rabbi Jochanan became the founder of a school at Jamnia, or Jafna, where the forms of their worship were revived. The state of the times was unfavorable to the progress of this school, but Rabbi Gamaliel succeeded Jochanan, and he was called **GAMALIEL JAMNIENSIS**, on account of his success. Many were now induced to return on account of the prosperity which attended this school, and very soon an additional one was formed at Tiberias, which finally became the chief seat of learning in Palestine. It was from this last mentioned seat of learning that the Jerusalem Talmud proceeded.

The intellectual state of the Jews improved; other schools were established at Bitterah, near Jerusalem; at Diospolis, at Cæsarea, and at Zippora in Galilee; and a succession of Jewish doctors were raised up to transmit their religion to posterity. These doctors were classed in a series which forms a succession down to the period, when, like others of their day,

they were enticed to engage in the study of the Aristotelian philosophy. They were, unfortunately, so given to the investigation of a trifling and absurd tradition, that whatever talents they might have possessed, were either wasted, or lost in the mysteries of cabbalistic metaphysics. Rabbi Jehuda Hak-kadosh, who adorned the school of Tiberias, was held in great esteem as a man of learning; and his memory is so highly revered by the Jews, that he has often been compared to the Messiah. He was the author of the wonderful compilation called the *Mishna*. This new digest of the oral law, and commentaries of the most famous doctors, cost him the labor of forty years, and was completed about the close of the second century. This first Talmud contains all the laws, traditions, institutions and rules of life which the Jews supposed themselves bound to observe; and it soon obtained credit among them, as a sacred book, notwithstanding its inconsistencies and absurdities.

In the practical operations of this digest of ecclesiastical law, however, it was found that many of its prescriptions and decisions were incomplete, and required further comments and illustrations. This task was undertaken by the disciples of Jehuda, Rabbis Chiam, and Oscaim, with others, and resulted in the *Gemara*, or completion of the *Mishna*.

Reason, in its search after truth, is too often permitted to follow the wild reveries of an unbridled imagination; and with the Jews, the times particularly favored an uncontrolled license to speculate in

mysteries and traditions ; so that with the ecclesiastical precepts of the law, a mystical traditionary system, which was called the Cabbala, prevailed.\* This foolish system shows that while they were professedly following the law of Moses, they had turned aside to do homage to a Gentile philosophy, and had mixed Oriental, Pythagorean, and Platonic dogmas, with Hebrew wisdom, by the help of allegory. This system originated in Egypt, but it soon found its way into Palestine, where multitudes were captivated by this method of philosophising upon divine things.

The abstruse and mysterious doctrines which it teaches, contrasted with the simple principles of religion in the Mosaic law, proves that it was not of Hebrew origin ; and the opinion which some have advanced, that the Cabbalistic dogmas have a great resemblance to the doctrines of Christianity, and consequently derived from divine revelation, owes its origin to an impression which the Christian fathers generally entertained, that pagan wisdom was to be traced to an Hebrew origin. Nor was it consistent with the national vanity of the Jews, and their reverence for the law of Moses, to acknowledge any indebtedness to pagan wisdom, so that they were driven to the necessity of making every thing, embraced by them from heathen philosophy, to be derived from the sacred writings ; and they reconciled all discre-

\* The Cabbala was the *esoteric* or concealed doctrine of the Jews, and is derived from כַּבְּלָה, which signifies *to receive*, because it had been received by tradition.

pancies by the allegorical mode of interpretation which they learned from the Egyptians.

Among the most distinguished Jewish doctors, who cultivated, with the study of tradition, Cabbalistic philosophy, were RABBIS AKIBHA and SIMEON BEN JOCHAI. The former is the author of a work called *Jezirah*, which treats of creation; and to the latter is ascribed the book *Sohar* or Brightness. These two works are the principal sources of our knowledge of the Cabbala. Akibha's book was quoted as of divine authority, and he was held in great esteem. There appeared in his day that famous impostor, *Bar Cochbas*, who pretended to be the Messiah, and promised to deliver the Jews from the power of the Emperor Adrian. Akibha was far advanced in life at the time, but he espoused his cause, afforded him protection and supported his pretensions. It is said that he collected an army of two hundred thousand men, who were finally blocked up, in the city of Bitterah, by the Romans, and after a siege of three years, he was made prisoner and put to the sword, and Akibha was flayed alive in the streets.\* It is asserted, by Jewish writers, that Akibha received the *Jezirah* from Abraham, but his work is Cabbalistic, after the Jewish schools of Egypt.

Simeon ben Jochai was a disciple of Akibha, and is called by the Jews the prince of the Cabbalists. After the sedition of Bar Cochbas, he concealed him-

\* Basnage, lvii. c. 12. Lightfoot, t. ii. p. 289.

self in a cave, where he pretended to receive revelations, which he delivered to his disciples, and carefully preserved in his book *Sohar*. This work contains a summary of Cabbalistic philosophy, and bears the marks of great antiquity.\*

Besides the schools, and peculiar perversions of their ancient religion by an admixture of Gentile philosophy, there arose, in the decline of the Jewish state, numerous sects, which destroyed all concert of action, and almost their identity as the ancient worshippers of the true and living God. Among these sects, the *Pharisees* are worthy of note. They connected with the ceremonial law of Moses many new and outward precepts, on the rigid observance of which, they laid great stress, while they neglected the more important work of righteousness and charity. They invented many external offices of devotion, which they accounted works of supererogation, and aimed at a higher state of holiness, by not only keeping the law, but by doing more than the law required, which they supposed themselves able to perform.

While some of this sect honestly sought justification in the deeds of the law, the Pharisees were generally hypocritical, and sought the applause of men, with hearts full of wickedness, and they indulged, secretly, in the most abominable crimes. The *Sadducees* opposed the Pharisees, because, being the richer part of the nation, their indulgence in luxury and earthly

\* Knorr. ed. Solibach, 1684. Amst., 1714.

comforts, was opposed to the rigid code of their neighbors. They rejected all the sacred books but the Pentateuch, and adhered to those religious truths only which a strictly literal interpretation would allow. They denied the doctrine of the resurrection, rejected a belief in angels and spirits, notwithstanding their admission of the divine authority of the Pentateuch; but they supposed the appearance of angels to be personations of the Divine Being. They placed great stress upon an external morality, in fulfilling the law, but supposed God, in some degree, unobservant of the affairs of men. The cold and heartless traits ascribed to them by Josephus, were, doubtless, owing to the affluence of their circumstances, which caused them to forget, in the enjoyments of luxury, those nobler characteristics of human nature.

There were others, who, on account of the trials of life, and a disgust of theological controversy, had withdrawn to the western side of the Dead Sea, and there lived in monkish retirement, and close and intimate union with each other. Their life and conversation exhibited, in many instances, that they sought a real piety of heart, and they soon, by their peculiar tenets, established themselves over all Palestine. These were the **ESSENES**. From the silence of the evangelists and apostles concerning this sect, and their difference from the rest of the Jews, some have supposed that they were Pagan philosophers, who adopted, in part, Jewish habits and opinions. From the testi-

mony of Josephus,\* this sect flourished in the time of Jonathan, the brother of Judas Maccabæus. The small remnant of the Jews that remained in Babylon after the captivity, from the oppression of Gadeliah, who was set over them by the king of Assyria, after their temple was laid in the dust, and their worship interrupted, took refuge in Egypt. Here the Pythagoreans had adopted many habits and opinions found among the Essenes, and the probability is, that the latter borrowed as much of their peculiarities as their reverence for the doctrines and institutions of Moses would allow; but both Josephus and Philo class this sect among the Jews. They were a people who generally cultivated the useful arts, paid great attention to agriculture, and were greatly skilled in the healing arts.† They superstitiously believed that they were guided in much that they professed to know, by a supernatural power; and they pretended to impart, after three years' novitiate, to those who were initiated, disclosures relating to spirits, from the ancient books they possessed, which books were kept sacred and secure from the eyes of all but those whose peculiar province it was to use them. They were a remarkable people, whose *yea* and *nay* had the form of an oath, for they, above all things, inculcated a love of truth.

The Jews of Alexandria deserve attention, as they

\* Aut. Jud. l. xiii. c. 18, 24, 25, l. xviii. c. 1, 2.

† Their name is, probably, derived from the Chaldaic, 'DN, *physician*; although many suppose that it comes from 'DN, which signifies *holy*.

exhibited a religious and theological character, originating in external circumstances, peculiar to themselves. Alexandria was one of the most flourishing seats of learning, particularly of Hellenistic literature, extant; and it occupied a point between the eastern and western world, which made it a great resort for men of learning. Here the Jews, being thrown much into intercourse with educated Greeks, gradually acquired their language; they lost by degrees their natural abhorrence of foreign customs, and became attracted by the charms of Greek literature and philosophy.

As an example of this, we find Philo, a Jew of Alexandria, born of a noble and sacred family, diligently applying himself, when young, to Grecian learning, and attained a high rank among the Jewish philosophers of his time. This great man explained the hidden sense of the Mosaic law by the use of allegories, and the dogmas of the Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy; and, without seeming to be indebted to heathen philosophers, made what use he pleased of their systems. He was attached to the Essenes, and through their example, probably, he ascribed to Moses the main dogmas of Plato, and interwove them with the sacred text, for he, with many others of his day, considered Plato a disciple of Moses.

The Jews who followed Philo, lost, to a considerable extent, that reverence for the institutions of their ancient religion, so characteristic of that people. Their supreme law consisted in the tenets which they



gathered from Grecian philosophy, and a kind of moral culture; with which miserable substitute they became so well pleased, that they dared even to ridicule the precepts of their ancient religion.

Many of the Jews of Alexandria went so far as to be seduced by the pomp of the Grecian mysteries,\* and were led farther from the old landmark than even Philo himself. It was Philo's object not altogether to sacrifice his religion as a Jew, and the holy writings of his nation, to the authority of a merely human philosophy, and he, therefore, recognised a simplicity and publicity in Judaism, in contrast with the manner in which the Grecian mysteries shunned the light. Upon this subject he holds the following language: "All mysteries, all such poms and such tricks, Moses removed far from the sacred lawgiving, because he did not desire that those who were educated in such a religion, suffering themselves to be blinded by mysterious matters, should neglect the truth, nor follow what belongs to night and darkness, neglecting that which is worthy of the light and of the day."† But notwithstanding he thus speaks against the mysteries, he must not be understood as wholly excluding them from his system. There were two points of view, in which he regarded religious knowledge to consist, namely, the *exoteric*, or public, and the *esoteric*, or secret. The *exoteric* doctrine was that which formed the public instructions

\* Heimroth's *Mysteries*.

† De Vic. Off. p. 56.

of the people from the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers. The *esoteric* was that which treated of the mysteries of the divine nature, and many other sublime subjects, and was called the **CABBALA**. This was after the manner of Egyptian mysteries, taught only to certain persons, who bound themselves under the most solemn curse not to divulge what they were thus taught.

These opinions led to the same result in men's minds, that was exhibited by Varro in his *theologia philosophica* and *theologia civilis*. The *exoteric* doctrine was for the people, and could be dispensed with by the initiated, who had no need of the observance of outward worship, because the *esoteric* was the reality of which the *exoteric* was the symbol.

This theosophico-ascetic spirit, which was created by the opinions of Philo and the Egyptian Jews, led many to the extreme of the ascetic, and the retirement of the hermit; and large numbers went to the shores of the marshy lake of Marcatis, near Alexandria, where they lived in quiet, shut up in cells, and devoted their time in the study and contemplation of divine things, and prayer. They lived only on bread and water, and fasted much. From some old theosophical writings, they acquired an allegorical mode of interpreting the scriptures, from which they built the system, and upon which they founded their errors. This was the sect of the *Therapeutæ*. They celebrated a love-feast, in which they ate bread, salt and hyssop, and on every seventh Sabbath, they held

a solemn convocation, where they sang some old hymns and choral songs, in the midst of mystical dances, which were kept up until a late hour in the night. The chapel where they met had two apartments, one for the men, and the other for the women; and every member had an appropriate place, according to his age; the utmost silence was observed during the service, which consisted of the delivery of a discourse by one of the elders, and singing, in conclusion. Some have supposed that this sect had a Christian origin, but this could not be the case, as they were distinctly known to Philo, who wrote before the introduction of Christianity in Egypt; and it is known that upon the introduction of Christianity, they gradually disappeared, either by their attachment to that faith, or amalgamation with other sects.\*

The Alexandrian Jews had not the same objections to Christianity as other Jews of the Roman empire, as they were not so much identified with the political and temporal expectations of the Messiah; and they show the striking effect, and wonderful design of God, in scattering them among the Greeks and Romans. The Jews measurably lost their identity in the sects and parties to which they separated, and the endless contentions which they had for the ascendancy of opinions, and the proselyting spirit, which the favor of the Romans to their ancient religion fostered, gave to designing leaders every opportunity of chang-

\* The Therapeutæ, according to Philo, was a branch of the Essenes. *De Vit. Contempl. Op.* p. 891

ing their established customs and peculiar opinions. The Jewish enchanter and jugglers made use of a thousand delusions for the purpose of impressing with astonishment all that came in their way; and they made converts merely by art, that their proselytes might exchange one kind of error and superstition for another. There were two kinds of *proselytes*, the first only bound themselves to renounce heathenism for the worship of the *one* God; these were the *Proselytes of the Gate*; but the other, the *Proselytes of Righteousness*, bound themselves also to an observance of the law, and underwent circumcision. The latter embraced all that peculiar fanaticism and superstition of the Jews, and were the blind led by blind teachers; while the former searched the Scriptures, from which they had taken many valuable truths, although they did not embrace Judaism as such. These were more accessible to the gospel than the proselytes of righteousness, and were not such persecutors of Christians. Of the proselytes of righteousness, Justin Martyr says, "The proselytes not only do not believe, but they calumniate the name of Christ twice as much as you, (Jews,) and they wish to murder and torture us who believe on Him, because they are desirous to resemble you in every thing." The Proselytes of the Gate, having no determined religious system, were, therefore, led to contend less against Christianity, and were more disposed to receive it, as they were curious to learn something which might serve to complete their system.

7

## CHAPTER III.

### MIRACLES AND CHRISTIAN LIFE.

**The Testimony of the Delphian Oracle—Its Loss—The Opinion of Porphyry—The Complaints of Heathens—Their Objection to Miracles—Christians classed with Jugglers and Magicians—Celsus' Means of Accounting for Miracles, and Origen's Reply—The true distinction between the Power of Working Miracles and Deceptions—Healing the Sick and Casting out Devils—The Character of Demoniaccal Influence, and the Opinions of Justin Martyr and Origen—The Importance of this Testimony—The Power to Work Miracles Imparted—The Continuance of Miracles—The Exorcists, and their Duties—Exorcism Essential to a Valid Baptism—Mr. Wesley's Opinion of their Decline—The Need of Miracles now—The Influence of Christian Life—Justin Martyr's Opinion.**

It now became manifest that the gospel was the power of God, through which the powers of darkness had received a blow that shook their dominion. The voice of demons, who felt their reign disputed, was hushed; for the oracles which gave a semblance of truth and power to the ancient heathen religion, were strangely silenced. Soon after the Saviour's advent they ceased to exert their influence, and their glory departed. The Delphian Oracle itself, when consulted by Julian, gave the following remarkable testimony: "The well constructed palace is fallen to the ground; Phœbus has neither a cottage nor prophetic laurel, nor speaking fountain, even the beautiful

water is extinct." And Lucian, who wrote his *Pharsalia*, in the reign of Nero, scarcely thirty years after our Lord's crucifixion, regards the loss of the Delphian oracle as one of the greatest misfortunes of the age; and Juvenal says,

—Delphis oracula cessant,  
Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri.—SAT. VI.

Porphyry wrote, that "since Jesus began to be worshipped, no man had received any public help or benefit from the gods." The sanctuaries of falsehood and imposture were abandoned. The cave of Trophonius—the grottos of the Sibyl—the tripods of Delphi—the stone of Teutales—the gloomy and mysterious caverns of Isis, of Mithras, and Vishnou, were no longer the instruments of human deception, and demoniacal influence. Sacrifices were suspended, and the illusions of idolatry were about to vanish before the truth of Christ.

The assaults of unbelief had often shaken the old religion, and its authority was on the wane when Christianity began to make inroads upon it; but now men seemed to betake themselves, with renewed fanaticism, to established customs, and labored to the last for their maintenance. They were accustomed to see their gods in signets and little images,\*

\* No idol was more common than a kind of black stone, called *Bætylos*. The priests of Cybele wore it on their breasts. The Greeks called it *Kioris*, as they worshipped it in the form of an oblong pillar. These stones, in some parts of Egypt, were placed on both sides of the road. There was an impression that they came from heaven; such was the case with the stone in the temple of Emesa, in Syria, which the emperor Heliogabalus caused to be conveyed, with

and they attributed to them the power to defend them against diseases, witchcraft, and all mischief; such men cried out, "Show us your God!" and complained that Christianity brought with it no images, no temples, no altars—and regarded it as a blind faith. And when the miracles, which were wrought by Christians, astonished and won many to their belief, the practice of every kind of delusion, by the base and infamous, gave the opponents of their cause the means of accounting for its rapid spread upon this principle, and classed them with the jugglers and magicians of these times. Celsus endeavored to account for the progress of Christianity in this way, and declared that these enchanters, who endeavored to deceive by the exhibition of supernatural powers, would find a ready belief among many, and create a temporary sensation, which would soon subside. Origen defends Christianity against these attacks, and shows that those were deceivers who were different in both manners and belief from the true followers of Jesus Christ.

The power of working miracles, possessed by Christians, was distinguished from sorceries, by the men who wrought the miracles, and the circumstances under which they were especially performed. There were many blindly superstitious, whom disease had driven to the temple of Æsculapius, that dreams sent

great pomp, to Rome. The Roman senate paid honors to the stone of Cybele, which was brought by a special embassy, under the illustrious Scipio Nasica. The Carthaginians worshipped a similar stone, under the name of *Abadir*, or *Magnificent Father*; and numerous other instances might be shown to prove the prevalence of this custom.



from the god of health might point out a certain remedy ; or that the priests and traders in enchantments might, by their incantations and amulets, perform the cure. These found, to use the language of Porphyry, that "the gods had ceased to help!" for they sought the promised aid in vain. When such were met by Christians, they were exhorted not to trust in dumb idols, made with hands, or seek help from the hands of demons, but to turn to the true and living God ; and without the magic formulæ which belonged to the enchanters and magicians, the Christians merely laid their hands upon them, and, in the name of Christ, bid them be healed. Finding themselves healed in the name of Christ, by persons who prayed to Christ that such might be done, they felt that He answered prayer. There was no other assignable cause, and the cure of the body soon leads to the cure of the soul.

In these remarkable times, there were many who were *possessed of devils* ; these were singularly affected ; they were sick in body and mind, violent convulsions followed, and they became seized by a strange power that impelled them, and agitated by an anxiety they could not explain, and of which they could give no definite account. These came under the notice of the church *exorcists*, and were healed. The character of this demoniacal influence is variously interpreted by the learned ; Lardner, Dr. Meade, Paley and others, among modern writers, are of opinion that it was a kind of insanity, not unlikely to be prevalent among a people peculiarly subject to

cutaneous diseases, and the belief in witchcraft and the prevailing superstitions of the day tended to a lunacy of this description. Some writers think, that when Josephus speaks of a certain herb,\* that possessed the power of expelling demons, and of the art of expelling them as descending from Solomon, that it was the effects of bodily affliction, and not really the result of demoniacal influence. The more ancient opinion, however, is, that it was the result of a real possession of evil spirits ; and Christians were, universally, during the three first centuries, of opinion, that the reign of evil spirits had been destroyed by Jesus Christ ; and those, thus possessed, were healed as displays of the subjection of evil spirits to the faithful. To show the extent of this impression, Justin Martyr, in his first apology, says, "That the reign of evil spirits has been destroyed by Jesus Christ, you might ascertain from what happens before your eyes ; for many of our people, of us Christians, have healed and still heal many possessed by evil spirits, in the whole world, as well as in Rome, adjuring them by the name of Jesus Christ, whom Pontius Pilate crucified ; and these were persons who could receive no relief whatever from any other exorcists." Irenæus says, "Some cast out evil spirits so radically and completely, that those purified from them, often become, afterwards, themselves believers, and members of the community ; others heal the sick by the laying on of hands.

\* Aut. viii., 2.

Already have many even been raised from the dead, and remain among us a tolerable number of years. There are innumerable operations of grace which the church has received all over the world from God, and daily brings forth for the advantage of the heathen, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, while it deludes no one, and asks no gain; for as it has received freely from God, so does it freely give. It performs nothing from the invocation of angels, nothing through spells and other evil arts; but purely and openly, (not with hidden arts and secret mysteries, as these Getæ, *heretics*, do,) it offers up its prayers to him who has created all things, while it calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." And Origen testifies, "I have seen many persons rescued from severe circumstances of delirium and phrensy, and many other evils, which no man and none of your demons could cure." The importance of this testimony will be apparent, when it is seen, that Origen thus testifies to the existence of miracles in the church, even down to the third century.

The power to work miracles was, in some instances, communicated by the apostles, but there is no doubt that the gift was actually conferred upon many of the primitive Christians, and could not, in many instances, have been dependant upon apostolic communication. That miracles existed until late in the third century, there can be no doubt; but supposing that St. Paul and St. Peter imparted these gifts until the time of their martyrdom, which most probably took place at

Rome, A. D. 66 or 67, and that St. John, whose life was protracted beyond that period, (as he did not depart until A. D. 100,) imparted them to others also; these might have lived through the earlier part of the second century, or until more than half that century had elapsed, and could not have continued longer, had they been confined to these only; but Origen says, "In the times of the teaching of Jesus, and after his ascension, more visible tokens of the operations of the Holy Spirit were visible, and in later days, fewer. *There still, however, remain traces of these operations among some few, whose souls have been purified through the word of God, and a life corresponding to it.*" As he was, therefore, an eyewitness to miracles in his day, they must have existed beyond the days of those who had the power to work miracles transmitted to them.

Their importance to the church was felt, and that importance is fully expressed by Origen, in the following language :\* "It is more through the power of miracles than through exhortation, that men became inclined to leave the religion of their country, and to take to a foreign one : for if we judge from probability, taking into the account the education of the first church community, it is scarcely credible that the apostles of Jesus, unlearned and ignorant men, should have relied upon any thing else in their preaching of Christianity to mankind, than on the power which was bestowed upon them, and the grace of God which accompanied

\* See Origen in Celsus, lib. viii.

their preaching; nor that their hearers should have suffered themselves to be detached from the habits of their country, deeply rooted in them by the revolution of ages, had not a commanding might and miracles, entirely opposed to those things among which they had been educated, induced them to become disciples." He says, that these demonstrations of the divinity of the religion of Christ were fewer in later days, and that they only continued among the most holy in the church. We have seen their importance, for even the greatest and best have been brought to God by their instrumentality.

But the power over opposition which miracles gave to the first teachers was so manifest, that when they declined in a measure, those who were supposed still to possess the power were made church officers. These exorcists were employed by each church, whose prayers\* were thought necessary to dispossess the catechumens of evil spirits at their baptism. This was especially the case in the North African churches, and as early as A. D. 256, the council of Carthage, composed of eighty-seven bishops, thought that exorcism was essential to a valid baptism. But we find no special formula in the ceremony of baptism, for the banishment of evil spirits, during the two first centuries; it sprang up at a time when a taste was

\* The prayers used on the occasion, were usually composed for the exorcist, as a part of the ritual, and the congregation joined him in the ceremony. While he took the possessed person to the out parts of the church, to pray over them, the congregation remained in prayer; and the possessed was thus relieved without any of the unmeaning ceremonies which afterwards crept into the church.

created for magic, and when there was a desire to perpetuate a means which the degeneracy of the church had lost, by attaching to the outward ceremonies a character that never was designed. It then became a lifeless ceremony, attached to a particular office of the church, the real character of which was hid in the change of life which the catechumens presented, by their mere adoption of Christianity in preference to heathenism.

Many writers, among whom was the learned and pious Wesley, evidently believed that their decline was owing to a want of faith ; for, adopting the language of another, he says, "it was not one faith by which the early Christians were saved, and another by which they wrought miracles ;"\* and whatever reason may be assigned for their absence from the church now, many, since their cessation, under the most trying circumstances, with little fruit of their toil, but with a sincerity that illy becomes us to question, have spent their labor and their lives in the instruction of heathens ; but who have often experienced a painful want of those supernatural credentials, when their situation made them appear especially needful and appropriate. We have no reason to say that miracles are useless, because they are seen no longer ; nor can we, with propriety, assert, that an all-wise Providence designs to convert the remaining millions of Jews and heathens by the credit of those recorded miracles, which Origen describes as bringing such glorious fruits to the labors of the early teachers of

\* See Notes on N. Test., Mark xvi., xvii.

the church. It may be a misfortune that the church has acted so long upon this assumption; it is certain that the heathen world is very slowly throwing off its paganism, even in this our day, and much is yet to be accomplished, ere the gospel shall be preached to all nations.

- Miracles had a wonderful effect, but the remarkable change which Christianity wrought upon the character and lives of its converts, presented a contrast so striking that its power was wonderfully displayed. Justin Martyr shows that this was not only designed in the change of life which Christianity effected, but that it really accomplished this object; he says, "The Lord wills not that we should recompense evil for evil; but he requires of us, through the might of patience and gentleness, to entice all men out of the disgrace of their corrupt desires; this we can prove by many among us, who, from violent and tyrannical men, have become changed by a victorious might, either by observing how their neighbors could bear all things, or by perceiving the patience of their defrauded travelling companions, or in some way or other in the intercourse of life, came to be acquainted with the life of Christians." Enemies became reconciled, and selfishness and distrust, which prevailed among heathens, were exchanged for a love and confidence, which was a source of wonder and astonishment to all who observed it; "see how they love one another," said they; and as they were accustomed to hate one another, to see Christians ready to die for each other, was matter of surprise.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OPPONENTS TO CHRISTIANITY.

The Better Sort of Opponents—The Pride of Platonists—The Self of Stoicism—Lucian—His Mode of Attacking Christianity—Celsus—His “Word of Truth” against the Miracles of Christ—Number of Sects among Christians, an Argument—His Ignorance of the Nature of Religion—Porphyry—His Oracular Responses—The Letter to his Wife—Hierocles—The Author of the Persecution under Diocletian—His Philaethes—His Baseness—His Profession—His Character—The Difference between Determining Questions of Faith and Policy.


THE doctrines and peculiarities of Christianity were now discussed, from the emperor to the meanest mendicant; and hostility to those opinions, according to the sources from whence they came, poured forth from every quarter. The better sort of opponents are those who use the more rational means to carry out their purposes, and will reason upon the subject; and although the first writers against Christianity indulged in the most sarcastic raillery, and combatted errors entirely imaginary, yet, if their opposition led them no farther, they were better than cruel and relentless persecutors, who murdered to crush opinions at variance with their own.

We have already remarked, that the Platonists were nearer to Christianity than any other philosophers, and that Platonism prepared the way, to some extent,



for its introduction. But there was a pride of opinion, and there were habits of thought, which could not suffer them to renounce their claim to superiority in religion ; they loved enticing speculations, which they must have exchanged for definite and faithful facts. Their teachers were philosophers, and their heathenism was decked with every grace of poetry and rhetoric. How, then, could they exchange these for a religion unadorned with human wisdom, the teachers of which were uneducated men, who came from the shops and the plough ! The Stoics, too, looked down from their lofty height of self-complacency and self-righteousness, the advocates of a chilling apathy and tranquillity ; they could see nothing but fanaticism in Christianity, and they considered it a blind delusion, unsustained by any philosophical proofs. These, therefore, had in their profession the groundwork of opposition to Christianity, and when they wrote, they either opposed to it their superstition, or an unbelief founded upon their ignorance of the religious wants of man.

Lucian was a writer who saw the defects in Christian character, as he thought, and governed by a worldly prudence and a cold indifference to Christianity itself, sought to bring to light all that struck him as remarkable in the external conduct of the Christian, that he might hold it up to the ridicule and disgust of heathens. He laughs at their presumption, mocks their folly, and derides their ignorance, when he says, that "The wretched people have



persuaded themselves that they are altogether immortal, and will live forever; therefore, they despise death, and many of them meet it of their own accord. Their first lawgiver has persuaded them also to regard one another as brethren, as soon as they have adjoined the Grecian gods, and honoring their crucified master, have begun to live according to his laws. They despise every thing heathen equally, and regard all but their own notions as profaneness, while they have embraced those notions without sufficient examination." St. Paul met the same sarcasm that is here urged, while he was at Athens, when he brought forward the doctrine of the resurrection, and no doubt Lucian alludes to the same subject.

About the time that Marcus Aurelius was persecuting the church with every cruelty, Celsus commenced his attacks upon Christianity, in his work, called the *Word of Truth*. One of the principal arguments in his writings is against the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, and he compares those miracles with the works of enchanters, for whom he claims the performance of far more extraordinary feats; such as casting out evil spirits, curing by enchantment all diseases, raising from the grave the spirits of departed heroes, spreading out by sorcery splendid feasts, and setting the most inert substances into motion like living animals; and he asks, "Shall we, for the sake of these things, consider them, (the Getæ,) the sons of God, or shall we say that they are the tricks of wretched and contemptible

men?" He is, likewise, the author of an argument often used against Christians, in reference to the number of sects, for he says, "At first, when there were but few of them, they all agreed; but now they have become numerous, they separate from one another: every man wishes to found a new sect, and now their agreement is only in name." He classed the sects and the writings of Christians together, without discrimination, in order to present the contrariety of opinions and practices which he found among them, placing all in the most unfavorable point of view; and he ridiculed the visions and sensualities of every fanatic, to overturn the truth of Christianity. He sometimes laughs at their sensuality, and sometimes at their spirituality. But he greatly mistakes the true nature of the Gospel, when he conceals not that he has become acquainted with its teachings, and employs his own blindness to refute its inestimable truths. He says, "Those who invite us to other religions, proclaim 'Let him draw near who is pure from all stains, who is conscious of no evil, and who lives in holiness and righteousness;' but hear what the invitation of Christians is: 'Whosoever is a sinner, whosoever is weak or deficient, in a word, every one that is a wretch, him will the Kingdom of God receive!' What, then, was not Christ sent also to those who are pure from sin? And a page or two farther on,\* he says, "Now it is manifest to every one, that those to whom sin has become a kind of second nature, no one can change

\*Lib. iii., 156.

by punishment, how far less than by mercy! for wholly to change any man's nature is the most difficult of all things." How little did Celsus know of the saving power of the gospel of Christ! how dark, indeed, must his mind have been, with the very means of life and immortality before him! He was not ignorant of the Scriptures, but in studying them, he sought for contradictions; not to inquire for truth, but to build up a system of error.

We have already spoken of Porphyry and some of his writings.\* In reference to his collection of oracular responses, it was evidently designed to show, that there was as much authority for Paganism as Christianity; and he exhibits a design to destroy the latter, by supplying the desire among men for something more from the gods than was known. He wrote a letter to his wife, pointing out the errors of Christianity, from which some suppose that she had embraced that faith. In one of the responses he gives, is found an answer to a man who inquired what god he should appease, in order that his wife might renounce Christianity; the reply of the oracle was, that "he might as well undertake to write on running water, or fly through the air, as to change the views of his polluted wife. Let her continue to lament her dead god!"

Another, and the most relentless opponent of the Christians, was Hierocles. He is said to have

\* See page 27.

been the author and instigator of the bloody persecutions in the reign of Diocletian. Tillemont says of the council, in which the question was discussed in relation to the extermination of the Christians, "Diocletian consented to refer the matter to the council, that the odium of the measure might be removed from him, and fastened upon those who had advised it. Several civil and military officers were summoned to the assembly, who, either from inclination or courtesy, supported the views of Galerius. Hierocles was one of the warmest in commending the persecution."\* Hierocles was a sophist, and while he encouraged the persecution, he published a book entitled *Philalethes*, or *Friend of Truth*; this work was well refuted by Eusebius, and it was on account of this, also, that Lactantius composed his *Institutes*. The *Philalethes* is only a repetition of the arguments brought forward by Celsus and Porphyry, with the addition of some of the most disgraceful falsehoods about the life of Christ.

At first vice-prefect, Hierocles afterwards became governor of Bithynia. He was also governor of Egypt, where he perpetrated the greatest barbarities. His baseness may be seen in the fact of his attack upon Christians, while under the sword of the executioner; but he lost his desired reward, for his course disgusted even the Pagans themselves. He was, by profession, a philosopher, but his life was opposed

\* Tillemont Mem. Eccles. t. 5, p. 20, Paris ed.

to his doctrine : in public, he preached moderation, frugality and poverty ; but he loved riches, pleasures and extravagance, and gave more costly entertainments than were customary at the palace. He published three books against the Christian religion, and began his opposition by saying that it was the duty of the philosopher to correct the errors of mankind ; and he professed to exhibit the light of reason to those by whom it had not yet been seen, and to divest them from that which subjected them to so many unnecessary evils. But when the motives by which he was influenced were discovered, he launched out into the most extravagant eulogiums on the princes, extolled the piety and wisdom which they evinced in the defence of the national religion, by endeavors to suppress an impious and puerile superstition.\* He endeavored to prove the contradictions which he pretended to find in the sacred writings, while he affected to do violence to his own feelings ; and he exhibited, at the same time, such an acquaintance with the Scriptures, as led to the conclusion that he himself was a Christian.

These assailants soon found a host of master minds, who refuted their sophisms, and unmasked their hypocrisy ; and the governors of provinces, the senate, and emperors of Rome soon felt that these sophisms would not cover the enormity of their crimes in the persecution of the innocent ; nor furnish even

\* Lactantius de Mortib. Persecutor, and Hist. Eccles., lib. 8, vol. 2, p. 420.

a ground for belief, that Christianity could be uprooted by such slender means. But the great difficulty with the apologists, lay in the fact, that, like their opponents with the Scriptures, their apologies were read by those who could only determine questions of polity and not of faith. With such, unless Christianity could be made a "Religio Romana," it could not be brought to their inspection, and its truthfulness must be out of the question while it remained excluded by law.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHARACTER OF THE FATHERS.

The Contrast between the Fathers and Apostles—The Change in the Character of Church Teachers—The Character of their Writings—Causes of that Character—Their Employment of Philosophy—Its Influence upon their Works and the Rise of Heresies—The Eclectic Philosophy of the Fathers—The Coalition—The Fathers favor the Platonic Philosophy—Their Opinion of Plato—Platonism not the Result of Reason—Their Deficiency in Criticism and Reasoning—The Alexandrian Philosophy—Its Effects upon Justin Martyr, and others—Fondness for Allegory—Their Peculiar Logic—The Spurious Writings—Their Department of Labor—The Rise of Apologists—The Alexandrian School—Carthage, and the Development of the North African Theology—The Poverty of Rome in Theology.

THE early teachers of the Christian faith present two phenomena of some importance to the church of Christ. The first is exhibited in the most remarkable champions of the faith who immediately succeeded Christ. They are seen confounding the wisdom of the wise, overturning ancient systems of error, shaking kings upon their thrones, making speechless the most famous oracles, attesting the truth of their mission by the most astounding miracles, writing the most infallible doctrines, and demonstrating the excellence and power of their teaching, by lives of unblemished purity, and by triumphant deaths.

Between these remarkable men and those who succeeded them, there is a wide difference. The



successors of the apostles were fallible men, their spirit and conduct, like all those who succeeded them, bore evidence to their fallibility; their writings, too, were mixed with a vain and deceitful philosophy, and their success in the cause of Christ, although great, yet incomparably less than that of the apostles, and not commensurate with the advantages which their day and circumstances afforded.

The peculiar authority with which the apostles were invested in their relation to the church, the kind of wisdom with which they were endowed, and the miraculous powers which they possessed, gave a safe direction to affairs, and a mode of determining all questions relating either to the doctrines of the church, or its ecclesiastical polity. But the church has not, at any period later, been blessed with such teachers.

As soon as the apostles were gone, the enemies of Christianity redoubled their exertions to destroy their labor; and their followers felt a painful want of *their* ability in defence of their principles, as well as of their presence and prayers to encourage the persecuted. It is true they left behind them infallible written instruction, and many comforting and consoling truths; and their oral teaching was, to a greater or less degree, stamped upon the churches where they had laid the foundation of an ecclesiastical polity; but no one succeeded in those peculiarities which gave these men such authority and power.

This change in the character of Christian teachers was not a gradual one, that might be ascribed to the difference in the ages in which they lived, for near to the apostles, in point of time, as some of the Christian Fathers were, a sudden, and clearly discoverable, contrast is exhibited in their productions. Upon the writings of the fathers are stamped the impressions of their times, and the influences of their education. Their productions contained fanciful notions of spiritual beings, and extravagances the most remarkable: they indulged in sarcasm and invective like men of the world; and it is impossible to exculpate them from dishonest arts and frauds, with a craftiness and captiousness in disputation, which very much resembled their adversaries. The apostles were preserved from these defects by a wisdom not of this world; hence the immeasurable superiority of the sacred writings.

This contrast was more the effect of circumstances, and the difference in the character of their relation to the church, than any fault of their own. They were not, in the first place, inspired in the sense of apostolic inspiration; and they possessed the sacred writings under great disadvantage. These brightening rays only shone upon them occasionally, and then with less lustre than might be supposed. Copies of the sacred writings were few and difficult to obtain; and occasional access was had to only parts of the gospels and epistles. Oral instruction from the apostles was, in a few years, effaced from the recollection, and, if its

authority had been retained, in the midst of apostolic canons and confessions of faith, which were multiplied in the church, as coming from the apostles' lips, such would have been its contradictory character, that it would have served no very good purpose.

Most of the Christian fathers had no other object in view than to spread the knowledge of Christ and his gospel to the world, and they executed their design with fidelity and zeal, unaided, in many instances, by rhetorical embellishments or philosophical refinements. Their writings bear the stamp of real piety, particularly those of Clement of Rome, Ignatius and Polycarp; and their works abound with evidences of their enmity to Pagan philosophy. It is evident that they were not uninstructed in that philosophy, but they made their knowledge, in this respect, subservient to the cause of Christianity; and their education, in that kind of learning, enabled them to borrow weapons to defend their cause. Their writings abound with details of the tenets of ancient philosophers, for the purpose of exposing their futility, and displaying the superiority of the Christian religion; for they thus enriched their writings, as a means of defence, with whatever they thought would be most likely to attract the attention of the higher classes.

They were not partial to any particular sect of philosophers, but employed their moral precepts by selecting from each, such as they supposed to coincide with the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, and

in this way they gradually departed from the simplicity and purity of apostolic days. This led to a studied use of the ancient writings, to adorn their works with the embellishments of erudition and eloquence; and, very soon, advocates were numerous among the fathers for the different sects of Grecian philosophers. This attachment to the various heathen philosophers, gave rise to the numerous heresies which arose from the Oriental system, as it was taught in Egypt in conjunction with Pythagorean and Platonic dogmas. The dreams of the Orientalists were multiplied without end, by the Christian Gnostics, and now that the evil effects of these departures from primitive simplicity were felt, the aversion began to show itself, but it was too late to remedy the evil. They inveighed against all Pagan systems, as containing many things contrary to the faith, yet they confessed, that every sect taught some principle allied to Christianity; and they were inclined to favor those authors who taught tenets most consonant to the faith. This kind of Eclectic philosophy was favored by most of the fathers, because they thought that the truths which were found scattered through the different systems were beyond the reach of human reason, and regarding them as rays of heavenly wisdom, they, unfortunately, incorporated them into their own systems of Christianity. Clement, of Alexandria, says,\* "I do not call that

\* Strom. l. i., p. 288.

philosophy, which either the Stoics, the Platonists, the Epicureans, or the Peripatetics, singly teach ; but whatever dogmas are found in each sect to be true, and conducive to the knowledge and practice of piety and justice, these, collected into one system, I call philosophy ;” and Justin Martyr\* expresses the very same sentiment. Origen, with many others, followed this Eclectic philosophy which the Alexandrian teachers had adopted, for they came to the conclusion that if a coalition could take place between Plato and Aristotle, there could be a better one formed between Aristotle and Christ. Others reasoned in the same manner with regard to Stoicism ; and, while the doctrines of Plato received almost universal favor, the Epicureans were the only philosophers who did not find favor with the Christian fathers.

One of the principle reasons why the fathers were, generally, in favor of the Platonic philosophy was, that they supposed Plato derived his wisdom from divine revelation. Josephus, the Jewish historian, has favored this opinion, and Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Eusebius, and Cyril of Alexandria, are in the same category. But they show, in this instance, a great want of attention to proper authority, as they had recourse to no authentic documents for these impressions, but derive them from suggestions of certain Jewish writers, who, to gratify their own

\* Dialogue cum Tryph. p. 218.

vain notions of superiority, pretended that all Gentile wisdom had been derived from Moses; and that Plato himself had been instructed in a Hebrew school during his residence in Egypt. In the second century, the learned Platonists who embraced Christianity, but continued their attachments to Plato, eagerly embraced this opinion; and all who affected the credit of Greek erudition, maintained that whatever doctrines Plato and his followers held, similar to the doctrines of revelation, had been borrowed from the bible.

They seemed to be impressed with the false notion, that it was derogatory to the character of revelation for Platonism to be the result of human reason; for, deriving their notions of Platonism itself from the Alexandrian schools, they had not learned to discriminate between Platonism and the Alexandrian philosophy, as the latter harmonised with Christianity more than the former.

Such was the character of these fathers, that their proximity to apostolic days did not prevent those philosophical subtleties, and the prevailing Judaism, from leading them into serious errors; for we find, with a remarkable ignorance of the Word of God, a singular blending together of Judaism, Paganism, and Christian doctrine. It is an acknowledged fact, that the farther we go back, the less of Scripture we find among their writings, and quotations become more frequent as well as more accurate as we advance in time; a fact which may tend to throw light upon the

cause of their departure from the purity of the faith. Their want of an intimate acquaintance with the Word of God, caused many of them to give credence to false traditions, and spurious writings; and propagate doctrines, shamefully at variance with revealed truth.

But, among the most fruitful causes of corruption, was the practice which the fathers borrowed from the Alexandrian Jews, of affixing an allegorical meaning to the words of Scripture. They were neither acquainted with the rules of sound interpretation, nor with the general principles of morality; so that this fanciful mode gave them liberty to put what construction they pleased upon particular texts. Their ideas of morality were carried, in some instances, to an extreme; as an illustration of this truth, it is only necessary to look at their doctrines in one particular. They held, for instance, a second marriage to be unlawful; and, in regard to morality upon this subject, they taught that there were three degrees of merit; the lowest, matrimonial fidelity; the second, matrimonial abstinence; and the third, perfect celibacy. And they also taught, that it was unlawful to put money out on interest, or to take any kind of oath.

So we must trace back many corruptions and adulterations of the morality of the New Testament to the enthusiastic spirit of the Alexandrian philosophy. The speculative and practical errors of this school, tintured the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenæus and Tertullian, and its corruptions gave rise to a singular

species of fanaticism, which consisted of the mystic notion of perfection common to Orientalists, Platonists and Gnostics. It taught that the soul is imprisoned and debased in its corporeal habitation, and that it becomes prepared to return to the fountain from which it proceeded in proportion as it is disengaged from matter, and purged from its impurities. This led to many unnatural austerities ; and the Christians who were emulous of the fame which the Therapeutic sect of Jews, and heathen philosophers had obtained, but with false ideas of its purifying influence, became known for their austerity and voluntary mortifications. Besides leading many to a monkish retirement, it is impossible to enumerate the errors and absurd practices which this singular idea of perfection introduced into the Christian church.

In the violent and relentless oppositions which they had to encounter, many of them fell into mistakes, reasoned badly, and falsely construed the Scriptures. It seems as though an injudicious zeal, in the heat of controversy, caused them to grasp every shadow with which to refute their opponents, and their singular fondness for allegory confounded their understandings, so that they have, in many instances, substituted fanciful resemblances for solid arguments. Many of them failed to draw a proper distinction between the light of reason and that of revelation ; as revelation, in many instances, presented subjects of faith and not reason, they erred in supposing that reason was to be rejected. Some went



so far as to say that *reason was the devil's work*, and, therefore, rejected it altogether; repudiating the logic of Aristotle as the deceitful wisdom of this world, they claimed to have a better in the demonstration of the spirit.

There are many works ascribed to the fathers, which are evident forgeries, and were written to employ the names of Christian teachers in giving sanction to absurd and foolish doctrines: of this character are the "Second Epistle of Clemens Romanus," "The Apostolic Constitutions," "The Apostolic Canons," The epistle of Barnabas," and "The Shepherd of Hermas." The first witnesses to the truth of God had scarcely left the world, when the Shepherd of Hermas made its appearance; but it is so strongly marked with the characteristics of fanaticism, that it could hardly be considered the production of a Christian teacher. The author borrowed from the Platonic schools, or from the Jewish Cabbala, his doctrine of good or bad angels, producing virtuous or vicious inclinations in man; and of angels appointed to preside over each animal.\* The spurious works ascribed to Clement, make him speak the language of an Alexandrian philosopher, and were probably written about the third century, by some Judaising teacher of Alexandria, with the hope of defeating the philosophers of that school.

We find the fathers taking different departments

\* Cabbal. Denud., t. i., pp. 3, 121.

of labor in the Christian church, as circumstances seemed to call them into activity. Clement of Rome, Ignatius and Polycarp, devoted themselves, principally, to the edification and comfort of the Church; their writings were, therefore, more particularly addressed to believers, and their labors directed to the internal peace and prosperity of the church. But in the more prosperous intervals of Christianity, as under the reign of Adrian, many of the higher classes came over to the Christian religion; and among these were many of a philosophical turn of mind, who mingled with the refined portion of society, and there learned what were the objections to the Christian religion. These persons now felt the necessity of defending Christianity against the sophistry and false reports which were gaining ground to the prejudice of their religion. They studied, therefore, to present the faith in a point of view more agreeable to the taste of the cultivated classes; and their comprehensive education and connections in life, fitted them, in a remarkable degree, for their task. These were the *Apologists*. Many among this class of the fathers were converted to the faith through their love of learning and acquaintance with philosophy; the fruitless disputations of the Grecian sects, and the infamous and fraudulent practices of many of their leaders had wearied and disgusted them; and having given their attention to Christianity, they discovered in it a divinity which astonished them, while its practical influence and remarkable power gave

them more satisfaction than all the wisdom of Pagans could bestow. How forcibly must the obscurity and barrenness of Pagan philosophy have been contrasted with the perspicuity and utility of those doctrines which were taught by Jesus Christ ! It was this that brought them to prefer Christ for their master, and enabled them to defend his cause with great boldness and power. The Gentile philosophers supported the falling fabric of paganism by sophistry and imposture, but these apologists, whatever may have been the errors which their philosophy had led them into, brought to the defence of Christianity much learning, and exposed the futility and absurdity of their opponents, while they exhibited the superiority of their faith over all that had been taught in the most celebrated Grecian schools.

It was, however, in Alexandria that these men gave such a remarkable direction to the theological spirit of the Church ; and propagated opinions which so deeply corrupted the faith. Alexandria was favorable to the propagation of Christianity, its position between the east and west, and its commanding eminence, favored the formation of a school, from which went forth to the world the theology of its masters. From the humble inquirer as a catechumen, under the spiritual direction of the Church catechist, it became a theological establishment ! It was necessary that the catechist should be a man of learned acquaintance with the Hellenic religion, and the philosophical opinions in vogue ; as they had to meet the prejudices which

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arose from a philosophical habit of thought among those who were converted to the faith; but they formed the habit of pointing out those parts of philosophy which developed such religious knowledge as Christianity might be engrafted upon, and in this way were led into serious errors. From the lecture rooms of this establishment there went forth men whose theological education gave an unfortunate direction to the spirit of the church, wherever they were found. And the germ of many angry controversies in more modern times may be traced to this source, for they indulged in mooted useless questions which gave them existence.

Carthage was another prominent locality where the peculiar characteristics of the North African theology were first developed. Having its origin in the celebrated Tertullian, it passed through many alterations, and immaterial changes, until St. Augustine's powerful mind arranged the chaotic mass, gave it form, and sent it forth to vex the whole western church.

How remarkable is the fact, that the Romish Church which has nursed so much error, should not have *originated* some theological spirit! She has always been a dependant theologian. Like the bird that takes the food which the industry of others have caught, she has always lived upon the spoils of her provinces, and loved to amass the earnings of these when they suited her peculiar policy. It was the influence of her *political* spirit that gave Rome such an ecclesiastical

influence; and the spirit of free inquiry was suppressed to preserve her outward existence and power, to prop up her episcopal seat, καθέξα; for she has always preferred to cultivate and sustain this, rather than to develop the doctrines and morals of Christianity.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CLEMENS ROMANUS.

**His Birth, Parentage and Education—His connection with St. Petre—His Succession—The Difficulty of Patristic Evidence—The Mode of Reconciling the Contradictions—His Epistle to the Corinthians—The Date in which it was Written—Its Character among the Churches—The Interpolations—The Epistle Lost—Found by Cyril—Where it may now be Found—The Second Epistle—The Apostolic Canons—Constitutions—Recognitions—Clementines—The two Syrian Letters—Clement's Doctrines—Divinity of Christ—Justification—Holiness.**

Among the fruits of St. Petre's ministry, is that distinguished divine and bishop of Rome, Clement. St. Paul names him among his "fellow laborers, whose names are written in the book of life."\* He was born of a noble family in Rome, before the middle of the first century, and was sent, early in life, to Athens, according to custom, to receive an education among the philosophers of that noted city. Here the Grecian philosophy was discussed by master minds, but not to impress Clement with any thing but its unsatisfying nature; unless, in the mighty chaos of opinions which surrounded him, there was an impression of the Deity, sublime in a degree, so much so at least, as to lead him to farther inquiry, which

\* Philip, iv, 3.

was greatly impeded by the mists of Pagan philosophy. With his mind thus exercised, accompanied with an ardent desire for something more satisfactory in its nature, he became acquainted with St. Petre, who introduced to his notice Christianity. He was just in a state of mind to be enraptured with its truths, and they found way to his heart.

It is said that he was with St. Petre some time, making himself thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines and polity of the Christian religion; and such was his piety, and usefulness to the church, that in A. D. 90, we find him a bishop in his native city.

Those writers who are fond of making out an episcopal succession, place Clement first after the Apostles; and confidently trace an unbroken line down to the present dignitaries of the church. The history of these times does not furnish very accurate information upon the subject; indeed, as it was a subject to which no attention was paid, until the rise of monarchical episcopal views in the third century, there was no knowledge that any importance would ever be attached to the subject.

When the first, second, or third bishop of Rome is incidentally named, there is such contradiction among the fathers, that no certain reliance can be placed upon their testimony; and it is, notwithstanding all the ingenuity displayed to make it appear to the contrary, difficult to come to any safe conclusion in relation to the position of Clement in this respect; Irenæus says, that Linus was first bishop of Rome, and after him Ana-

cletus, and after him Clement : this is his language. "The blessed Apostles, therefore, founding and instructing the church, delivered to Linus the bishopric to govern the church. Paul makes mention of this Linus in his Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus : after him Clement obtained the bishopric ; who both saw the Apostles themselves and conferred with them." Tertullian, on the contrary, declares that Clement was first bishop of Rome in the following language : "For, in this manner, the apostolic churches deduce their succession, as the church of the Smyrnians traces the line of its succession up to Polycarp, who was placed there by St. John : thus, the church of the Romans also refers us to Clement, who was ordained by St. Petre." It will be observed, that Irenæus makes Linus the first bishop of Rome, and Clement the third ; but Tertullian makes Clement the first. In the same manner, Tertullian says, that St. Petre was first bishop of Antioch, while Jerome says, that St. Petre was the first bishop of Rome, and sat in that office twenty-five years, till the last year of Nero. To what this confusion may be owing we leave the reader to judge, it may be partly accounted for in the fact, that originally the terms were not understood in the sense of modern Episcopalians, and more than one might have been bishop during the same time.

Being among the first after the Apostles, whose productions have come down to us, the writings of Clement are looked upon with interest. He cer-



tainly wrote after the middle of the first century; there are but few internal marks to enable us to decide upon the precise time. The Epistle to the Corinthians was written at the close of some sore persecution, for he speaks of "sudden and repeated calamities which had befallen the church of Rome." If allusion is here made to one of the general persecutions, it must have been either after that of Nero, A. D. 64, or after that of Domitian, A. D. 94. As he speaks of Petre and Paul as recently put to death; of the Jewish temple, as though it were still standing, so that the war which broke out, A. D. 67, had not taken place, the strong presumption is, that the earlier date is the true one. This is the more probable from the fact, that the name of Fortunatus occurs in chap. lix, of this Epistle: who is doubtless the same of whom St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor. xvi, 15-17, and who would have been too old and infirm to undergo the fatigues of a journey from Corinth to Rome, at that time of life, if the latter was the correct date.

This relic of Christian antiquity stood high in the estimation of all the churches, and is spoken of favorably by many of the early writers. Irenæus speaks of it as a most powerful production. Eusebius denominates it "a great and admirable Epistle," and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, about A. D. 170, affirms, that it was so greatly esteemed by the Church at Corinth, that it was read aloud in the assembly, from its origin down to his day; several other churches employed this letter in the same way.

The Epistle, as it has reached our day, is not free from serious interpolations; which seem to have been the work of those who strove to establish a priesthood in the church. Throughout the work we perceive the simple relation of the earliest forms of the Christian system; the equality of elders or presbyters and bishops, is clearly expressed in one part, yet the order of the priesthood is transferred to the Christian church in another.\* The whole character of Clement as a writer, the absence of the priesthood from the church in his day, and his expressed opinions to the contrary, in other portions of his work, prove the adulteration and interpolation of his writings.

Whether the times were not calculated to call forth discussion of Christian doctrine, or Clement was not disposed to polemics, it is certain that there is nothing which distinguishes him as being possessed of a spirit of controversy. He wrote, however, to *Christians* to comfort and strengthen the church at Corinth, and not to discuss any doctrine or usage; but even with this object in view, he so far contradicts the interpolations of the Epistle, that no ingenuity can reconcile them. He strongly asserts, that no man can be *justified by works, or his own righteousness*, but through *grace alone*, and concludes by saying, "What shall we do, then, brethren? shall we be slack in doing good, and neglect love? The Lord would, in nowise, suffer this to happen with us, but he induces

\*See sec. 40.

us to endeavor to fulfil all goodness with unabating zeal, for the Creator, and Lord of all, delights himself in his work." In the other works ascribed to Clement, there is nothing that looks towards the establishment of a Christian priesthood; but on the contrary, the ministry is not separated from the laity, and the inference might be made that the former was not regarded as a separate order, or claimed as a distinct privilege.

Notwithstanding the high estimate placed upon this epistle, it was lost for centuries. Many parts of it were found scattered through the works of the fathers of later date, but the epistle itself was hid in the lumber of antiquity, and supposed to be lost among the innumerable works of ancient times; Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, however, found it appended to a manuscript containing the Septuagint version of the Old and New Testament; and it was afterwards presented to king Charles the First, of England. It is now in the British Museum, and was first published at Oxford, in 1633.

The second Epistle to the Corinthians, as Dr. Mosheim justly says, "is falsely palmed upon this holy man, by some deceiver," and the *Apostolic Canons*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Recognitions of Clement*, as well as the *Clementina*, were ascribed to him, that they might obtain greater authority. The *Apostolic Canons* are eighty-five ecclesiastical laws, and as they show the main features of the discipline of the Greek and Oriental churches, at a very early period, they are of importance. There have always been

some captious and discontented spirits in the church, whose austere and melancholy temperament, with a desire to introduce reform, set them to work with the impression that the worship and discipline of the church had greatly deteriorated, and changed from their primitive purity. The eight books of the *Apostolical Constitutions* are the production of such, but in order to give them the needed character, the author ascribes them to the apostles. Of whatever value they may have been in determining the order and discipline originally, they have undergone material change since, especially when they passed through the Arian controversy.

The *Recognitions* and *Clementina* are but the fabulous effusions of some Jewish Christian of Alexandria, who strove to present his views in the best light through the form of pretty fables, in opposition to the philosophy and Gnosticism of his day. The *Canons* and *Constitutions* were ascribed to Clement as the collector and publisher merely, but the *Recognitions* and *Clementina* were ascribed to him as their author. There is no doubt but the same individual is the author of all these works, as they all relate many things in precisely the same words. They profess to show the history of Clement's own dissatisfaction with Paganism; and represent him as travelling from Rome to Palestine, where he meets St. Petre, in whose society he remained for some time, witnessing his conflicts, and hearing his private conversation, and those of the apostles. He professes to have thus

learned every thing in relation to Christianity, as well as cosmogony, physics and pneumatology.\*

The Syrian church has preserved two circular letters of Clement's, addressed to Christians living in celibacy, entitled *De Virginitate, seu ad Virgines*. They are in the Syriac language, and were first brought into Europe, by Sir James Porter. They were published by the learned Wetstein, with a translation at the end of his Greek Testament. Wetstein not only published these letters, but defended their genuineness against the attacks of Dr. Lardner, with great ability. They bear the marks of high antiquity, as may be seen in the absence of all attempts to support the church hierarchy; and they speak of the gifts of healing as free, and not confined to any particular class of persons. The argument against their genuineness, is, that they were no where quoted until the fourth century, and that they were counterfeited during the third century, to countenance the introduction of celibacy, and cover the abuses which had now become apparent, and which were bringing the practice into disrepute.

In the genuine writings of Clement, he alludes indirectly to many of the books of the New Testament, but no mention is made of the Gospels, and there is

\* The first of these works is entitled *Sti Clementis Romani Recognitiones*. The original work has not reached our day, but we have a Latin translation. The second is the *Clementina*, and contains 19 homilies, (*Ὁμολογίαι*) purporting to have been delivered by St. Petre, and treasured up by Clement. The third is an epitome, or abridgement of the travels, discourses and acts of St. Petre, and contains a Greek epistle of Clement to James.

but one book\* in the New Testament, which is expressly quoted any where in his works ; nor does he make the slightest allusion to the existence of miracles in the church.

The supposition that Clement did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, is not correct; and this opinion has been strengthened by the impression that, throughout his writings, he does not express himself in terms sufficiently distinct in reference to the exalted nature of our Lord.† He no where speaks against the doctrine, and it should be remembered, that as no controversy had disturbed the church up to this time on that subject, there was no necessity for guarding the subject by the use of particular words and phrases, as in after times. If there is any thing objectionable in his writing, from the use of unguarded modes of expression, the fact, that he did not believe in the Divinity of Christ, cannot be made apparent ; on the contrary, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xxxvi, he calls Jesus Christ the Son of God, the brightness of God's glory, greater than angels, having obtained a more excellent name than they ; and in chap. xxxii, he makes a distinction between the two natures of Christ with great clearness.

He also clearly teaches justification, "not by ourselves, neither by our own wisdom, or knowledge, or piety, or the works which we have done in holiness of heart ; but by that faith by which God hath justi-

\* 1 Cor. i, 12. C. 47. † Photius Bibl. Cod. 126.

fied all men from the beginning.”\* He says, that “the grace of repentance was purchased for the whole world, by the blood of the atonement of Christ, which was shed for our salvation ;” † and he is careful to insist upon the necessity of repentance, holiness of heart, peace with God, and humility after the example of Christ, ‡ as well as the resurrection of the body, and life eternal. §

Such were the doctrines taught by this holy man, while his care was over all the churches ; and his character, among the persecuted and despised followers of Christ, in his day was such, that his letter was hailed by the Corinthian church as a comforter, and employed as part of divine service ; and every line ascribed to him looked upon as containing a treasury of sacred knowledge.

\* C. 32. † C. 21-49. ‡ C. 16. § 24-26, c. 35.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

The Difficulty of Tracing its Spread—The Claims of Churches—What the New Testament Teaches—Petre's Labors—The Gospel in Persia—Mesopotamia—John's Labors—Thomas'—Missionary from India—St. Paul—Clement's Account—The Time in which he Labored after His Acquittal—Proofs of his Visit to Britain—Tertullian and Eusebius—British Christianity from Rome—Archbishop Usher—Austin the Monk—The Loss of Primitive Christianity.

THERE was nothing to stop entirely the spread of the Gospel, notwithstanding the absence of the inspired writers. The men who succeeded them were ready, at the expense of fortune and life, to go any where, in order to spread abroad the knowledge of its saving power; and, although they met with violent opposition, it was soon demonstrated that no arm could stay its progress—that no power could break its hold upon the world.

It is very difficult to trace, in the earliest periods, its exact direction; partly for the want of authentic documents, but mostly, from the corruptions and forgeries which have arisen through a desire to trace the origin of churches to an apostolic fountain.



Dr. Mosheim dates the rise of these corruptions, since the days of *Charlemagne*, but the zeal for the antiquity of churches began earlier than this, for many of the ancient writers quoted by Eusebius, say much upon the subject, with an evident object to place it in a light suited to their prepossessions.

The New Testament teaches us that in the days of the apostles, the gospel had spread in Arabia, Asia Minor, Syria, Cilicia, Parthia, Greece, and the neighboring districts, as far as Illyria and Italy: *Peter* preached long in Judea, and other parts of Syria: but we find his labors in Babylon, Asia Minor, and in Rome, where he met with a glorious martyrdom. Some of the effects of his labors in Persia were known very early, although it then belonged to the Parthian empire, when the old Persian empire, under the Sassanidæ, obtained its independence. We find the Persian Magi endeavoring to form a sort of connection between the religion of Zoroaster and Christianity, which goes to show that it had spread to an extent that required some time to accomplish. In Mesopotamia it had reached the throne itself even as early as the second century; for the impressions upon the coin of the country had been changed from the image of Baal to that of the cross.

*John's* labors were confined to Judea, Ephesus and Patmos, where he was banished in 94, and where he died, six years after. *Thomas*, according to a tradition in the writings of Origen, was the apostle of the Parthians; and Gregory, in the

latter half of the fourth century, says, that St. Thomas preached the gospel in India. Eusebius\* states that Pantænus made a missionary tour eastward and preached as far as India; and as the Parthian empire then touched the borders of India, it is likely that these traditions are correct—India, however, is a very indefinite term with these ancient writers: Jerome understands it to mean Ethiopia, and many of the ancients called Arabia by the name of India—and as it is certain, that in the time of Constantine, Theodosius, a missionary, came from the country about the entrance of the Persian gulf; and as *Thomas* travelled eastward, it is likely that Parthia, Media, Persia and India were his fields of labor.†

In reference to St. Paul, the account which Clement‡ gives of his labors, after the close of that part of his history which is found in the Acts of the Apostles, is valuable to the church, as it shows where his labors were directed, in the interval between his acquittal at his first trial at Rome, and his martyrdom.

To form a correct idea of the extent of the travels of this great man, it is necessary to fix, as nearly as possible, the time that elapsed between his residence at Rome for two years,§ and his martyrdom. His first visit was near the time when Felix was recalled from the government of Judea,|| which, according to

\* I. 10.

† Pantænus found the seeds of Christianity already sown in India, and a Hebrew gospel was in circulation among the people.

‡ Ep. ad. Cor. c. v. § Acts xxiv, 10. || Acts xxiv, 27.

Josephus,\* was the second year of Nero, A. D. 56, for he says, that Felix would have been punished for his conduct, had not his brother Pallas, who was then at the height of his favor with Nero, procured his pardon; and Tacitus† also shows how dependent Felix was upon the influence of his brother with that tyrant. But Pallas, according to Tacitus,‡ was dismissed by Nero, in the second year of his reign, and was brought to trial and put to death in the ninth year. If, therefore, the pardon of Felix was procured by the influence of Pallas when he was in favor with Nero, his recall must have been about the second year of Nero's reign. Eusebius and Jerome both agree in the opinion that St. Paul's first journey to Rome was about this time; and it is probable that his release took place at the time when favors were shown to prisoners and exiles upon the death of Agrippina. St. Paul was put to death about the time of the persecution which began in the eleventh year of Nero's reign, and which lasted eleven years. Jerome and Eusebius say, that he suffered martyrdom in the fourteenth year, which would leave about eight years for his labors after his *first* imprisonment at Rome.

It was during this space of time, that, according to Clement, St. Paul visited "the farthest extremity of the west," in compliance with an intention which he expresses in Romans, xvi, 24-28; and one of the

\* Aut. 20. C. 8, 9. † Annal. 12, 54. ‡ Annal. 13, 14.

countries included in his tour was Spain. The evidence of this fact is, however, very clear, as Caius the presbyter, in the beginning of the third century, and Hippolytus, who wrote about the same time, affirm that St. Paul visited Spain.\*

But Clement signified that he visited the countries beyond Spain, as his expression meant the three western provinces, Spain, Britain and Gaul; for that term was often used by ancient authors to denote those provinces. It is so employed by Plutarch, Eusebius, Theodoret, and others. In connection with this, there is direct evidence, that the gospel was preached in Britain by some of the apostles. Tertullian, in the second century, speaks of the diffusion of Christianity throughout the world, and enumerates Spain, Gaul, and Britain among other places,† and says, “all the extremities of Spain, and the different nations of Gaul, and parts of Britain, inaccessible to the Romans, but subject to Christ.” But Eusebius, in that remarkable passage in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, where he argues that the first preachers were not impostors, from the fact, that they had even preached in Britain, says, “For supposing it to be possible for rustic men, wandering about their own country, to deceive and be deceived, and not to waste their labors in vain: yet, that they should preach the name of Jesus, to all man-

\* Messutius de vita Pauli, l. 13. c. 1. Reliquæ Sacræ, vol. iv, pp. 4, 37, and Hippolytus de xii Apostolis, Appendix, p. 31. There is some doubt, however, about the genuineness of this work.

† Adv. Jud. c. 7.

kind, and teach his miraculous works in country and city; that some of them should visit the Roman empire, and the imperial city itself, and others severally the nations of the Persians and Armenians, and Parthians and Scythians; nay, further, that some should proceed to the very extremities of the inhabited world, and reach the country of the Indians: and others again, pass over the ocean to those which are called the *British Islands*; all this I conceive to be beyond the power of any human being, not to say of ordinary and uninstructed men, and, still less, of deceivers and impostors.”\*

Many writers have endeavored to show that Britain received her Christianity from Rome, at a very early period. It is stated upon the authority of Bede, that Lucius, a British king, in the latter part of the second century, sent to Eleutheros, then bishop of Rome, for missionaries to be sent to him. There is so little resemblance in the ancient rituals of the British churches with that of Rome, and such a striking analogy with those of Asia Minor, that if the planting was of Paul, *Simon Zelotes*, or Joseph of Aramathea, as many insist, the ritual did not much favor the training from Rome. It is known too that Britain withstood, for a long time, every effort on the part of Rome to introduce her authority.

It is confidently asserted, that there were a number of churches in Britain as early as the middle of the second century. According to archbishop Usher, there

\* Lib. iii, p. 112.

was in the year 182, a school founded for the instruction of students in theology, in order to provide a more learned ministry for the churches. Austin, the monk, was no doubt the first who succeeded in introducing Romanism in England; he was the first archbishop of Canterbury, and he subjected England to the see of Rome. It was in this struggle for ascendancy, that Britain lost her apostolic origin. The British churches refused subjection to Rome, and withstood every effort to reconcile them to the newly established order; and the pious and devoted pastors of the flocks, in Wales especially, evinced a firmness never excelled. The enraged prelate gathered *Saxon armies*, and punished the primitive Christians with death, shedding the blood of multitudes for their firm adherence to their primitive faith; and as those who remained did not coalesce with Rome in their worship and service, they were in the course of time **ANNIHILATED.**\*

Thus the gospel had spread abroad, up to the time in which the apostles were succeeded by those teachers of the faith, who were now to enter upon the great work allotted them; and keep alive, in every place, where churches were formed by their illustrious predecessors, the flame of Christian devotion. Half of the second century had not elapsed, before the effects of an almost interrupted peace since the dawn

\* The reader will excuse the extension of this subject beyond the times of which we write, as the author did not like to break a thread that came so soon to an end.

of that century, opened a wide field for the development of the Christian religion. It had spread throughout the Roman dominions, creating a new moral republic from the communities of almost every city, acting under a new impulse, and governed by new laws. The number and opulence of the congregations in the provinces of Gaul and Africa, unrivalled those of the east: while a close and intimate correspondence was so maintained among them, that from Egypt or Syria, to the remotest frontier of the west, every impulse or opinion which originated, spread with remarkable rapidity, and the fathers in one section, however remote, were found controverting the opinions and speculations of another. Thus Irenæus was found in Lyons, controverting the speculations of the teachers of Antioch, Edessa, or Alexandria; and Tertullian in Africa, in his Punic Latin, was busy with opinions which sprang up in Pontus, or in Phrygia. But peace and prosperity were to be interrupted for a season, for a change was soon to take place in the relative position of Christianity, with the religion of the Roman empire.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PERSECUTIONS.

**The Causes of Persecution—The Rights of Man—The Difficulty of Introducing any New Religion—The Common Reproach—The Mode of Accounting for Roman Persecution—The Disposition of Magistrates—The Better Condition of the Jews—A National God—The Causes of Popular Fanaticism—Christians Slandered—Private Interests—The Civil Power Arrayed—*Nero*—Information from Tacitus—*Nero's* Cruelties—The Discrepancy between Lactantius and Tacitus—*Nero* the Anti-christ—Domitian—Flavius Clemens, Wife and Niece—St. John—Nervas' Administration—Success of Christianity—Trajan—The Trouble of the Church—Pliny—His Investigations and the Result—His Opinion of Christians—The Success of Paganism—Pliny's Letter to Trajan, and the Reply—Clement of Rome, His Sufferings and Death—The Esteem of the Church for Him—The Church Erected to his Memory.**

**DURING** the long struggle of Christianity for a peaceable existence in the Roman empire, there were several causes at work in the elements of society to excite and keep alive the spirit of persecution. All the teachings of heathenism looked to a blind submission to the religion and regulations of the state: the rights of man, and the liberty of conscience were strangers in this age—it was reserved for the gospel of Christ to break the yoke of tyranny, and free man from the fetters which bound both mind and heart.

Religion was under the control and regulation of the civil rulers, and formed an important item in the system of government: where such is the case, it is difficult to separate the introduction of any new re-



ligion from political prejudices, and it must have been particularly so in this case, as tyrants are always watching against the introduction of any innovations upon the established usages of their people, lest it should be an aim at their deliverance from oppression. From this cause, the assembling of Christians was looked upon as undermining the state, and contravening the laws of the empire, *Non licet esse vos* became the common reproach of Christians by their heathen adversaries; but Tertullian accounts for it in the fact, that Christianity was not recognized by law among the "Religiones Licitæ."

As it was usual for Rome to extend to a conquered people the privilege of observing their own religion, it was thought strange that it should have persecuted Christianity with such unceasing malignity, and, at the same time, be so tolerant to others. But it should be remembered, that the universal sovereignty of Rome, was attributed to the friendship of the gods of all nations; and it was their policy to win the regard of a conquered nation, by making friends of their gods; so that Rome was the seat of learning for all religions, because they were expressly provided for by law; and that law prescribed the mode by which a Roman citizen might be permitted to join in the worship, or the celebrations of any foreign religion. This not being the case in relation to Christians, the arguments brought by their adversaries that they were secretly contravening the laws of the state, appeared the more plausible.

Many of the Roman governors were not personally opposed to Christianity, but being ignorant of its nature, when Christians were brought before them for a violation of the emperor's edicts, they frequently proposed that they should comply with the laws and regulations of the state, without renouncing their faith; that they need only comply outwardly with the law, and observe the ceremonies required by the state, while in their hearts they might honor and worship what they pleased. Such was the case when Polycarp was taken prisoner; the pro-consul only desired him to say something that would savor of allegiance to Cæsar, for he evidently strove to avoid the painful result of his firmness, and the disgrace of condemning a venerable old man to a cruel and shameful death.

From the very same causes above enumerated, the Jews fared better than the Christians; although they were not permitted to make proselytes of Roman citizens, and laws were enacted against circumcision; yet there was recognized, in the God of the Jews, a national God; and of course, as such, entitled to the veneration of a Roman. As the very frame work of civil society was kept together by a national religion, and Christianity proposed to bring together "Greeks and barbarians, in Asia, Europe and Libya,"\* and unite them under one and the same system, in the bonds of the strongest possible regard; when it spread among all classes, and threatened to overturn the religion of the state, it became the object of hatred

\* Celsus, book viii, p. 425.

and persecution; and every movement of it was watched with a jealous eye.

It could not be supposed that among a people devotedly attached to their state; as were the Romans, that the spirit of opposition to Christianity should remain with the civil authorities. The same devotion and blind fanatical zeal, exhibited itself in the most extravagant popular fury; and as it could not be controlled by civil regulations, it became the terror and destruction of hundreds of innocent Christians. To keep up this popular rage, and inflame the hatred of the people, reports of every kind were spread abroad: Christians were charged with secretly eating their children; and drought, flood, earthquake or famine, or whatever public calamity befel the people, was attributed to their existence in the Roman empire. They were given over by the gods to the rage of their fellows, for, in the estimation of the mass, the anger of the gods was kindled against them. Esculapius would no longer look with commiseration upon the diseased, and relieve their maladies, because the world permitted the existence of Christianity; and lying priests, to prevent exposure when their arts failed, attributed all their failures to the same cause.

Private interests, too, were at work to add fuel, if possible, to the flames of popular fury; priests, artificers, magicians, and cynics, all clamored against these introducers of strange doctrine, because, like Demetrius, idolatry was their gain. While this state of things lasted, there could be expected but little tran-

quillity to the church, in the exercise of its rites, until some favorable change could be wrought in the public mind and the laws of the state.

The arm of power was now uplifted to crush, with an iron sceptre, the men who declaimed against the gods ; and to destroy, if possible, the rising sect. For some time the hatred of the state lay dormant in the court of the emperor, and the bosom of his magistrates, but at length it broke forth, and Nero had the unenviable position of being the first to kindle the flames of a general persecution. Nearly all we know of this first persecution we owe to Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian ; who is of opinion, that Nero turned the tide of public indignation from himself upon the Christians, to escape the odium which was justly due to his own wanton cruelties. Having ordered the city to be fired, for the gratification of his diabolical disposition, he found it necessary to soothe the wretched and indignant sufferers. "But no munificence of the prince, no human aid, nor expiations of the gods, removed from *him* the infamy of having ordered the conflagration. Therefore, to stop the clamor, Nero falsely accused, and subjected to the most exquisite punishments, a people hated for their crimes, called Christians."\* Every invention of diabolical men was put into requisition, to make sport for the people ; Christians were smeared with combustible materials and set fire to at night to illuminate the city ; many were enclosed in the skins of

\* *Annals*, lib. xv, c. 44.

wild beasts, and dogs turned upon them to devour them. Even the gardens of the emperor were devoted to games and shows at the expense of the lives of these innocent sufferers.

There is a discrepancy between *Sactanius*\* and Tacitus, in reference to the designs of Nero in this *persecution*; the former attributes to him the design of seeking the extermination of Christians, and resorted to those means to accomplish his object, but the latter thinks, "they were falsely accused, by the instigation of the tyrant, not because he had any thing against them, but because they were a despised people, and he hoped to avert the public odium from himself by letting loose the popular fury against them; he says they were destroyed, not with the object of advancing the public good, but to satisfy the cruelty of an individual." It will be seen that Sactanius was correct in his opinion, when it is known that the hatred of Nero towards Christians was of the most inveterate character; and the persecution was not confined to Rome, but became general, and ceased only upon the death of that tyrant. This was the impression of former ages, and Tertullian clearly says, that *laws* of the empire caused the sword of persecution to be unsheathed against Christians, in the time of Nero and Domitian.†

During the persecution, Christians were deeply impressed with the opinion that Nero was the living anti-christ; and they supposed after his death he would

\* De Morte persecutorum, cap. ii. † Apologet, cap. iv, p. 46.

reappear upon the earth in that character undisguised. The persecution began\* in the month of July, A. D. 65. It first lasted six days, but in the same year it broke out again; and, although there is no authentic account, yet the probability is, that it continued until Nero's death. *Domitian*, who reigned from A. D. 81, was little inferior to Nero in disposition and conduct, and his cupidity and cruelty were alike gratified in the persecutions of his day. Through a profession of informers, he was aided to remove out of the way such Christians as suited his views, jealousies, or avarice; and many of the martyrs were of the wealthy and respectable classes. A consul, by the name of *Flavius Clemens*, with his wife and niece, suffered in this persecution; and *St. John*, who was yet alive, was banished to the isle of *Patmos*. *Tertullian* has led many to believe that he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, and came out unhurt,† but the story seems to be rejected by many critical and discerning scholars.

*Domitian* was soon murdered, and *Nerva* succeeded, in 96, to hold the reins of government but a short time. The church, under the administration of this emperor, had a respite. He abolished many of the sanguinary laws and regulations of his predecessors; secret informers were no longer allowed; slaves could not witness against their masters;

\* It is determined by the time of the conflagration, which *Tacitus* says began the 18th of July of that year. *Annals*, xv, 38, 41.

† *Ze Proscript. adv. hæret.*, c. 36.

the banished were recalled ; and those things which were permitted to form the ground of charge against the Christians were abolished. Under such favorable circumstances, Christianity rose up like the phoenix from its ashes, and spread its balmy wings over many a wretched heart. The heathen temples were now forsaken, so that the usual services of idolatry could scarcely be maintained, and the word of God was preached among all classes. But in the midst of such prosperity, Nerva died, and Trajan came into power.

Trajan had no sooner ascended the throne than he published an edict, which was designed to bear upon Christians, and break up their assemblies. This very soon became a source of great trouble to the church, and laid the foundation of the persecutions that followed.

It was during this reign, that the celebrated Pliny the younger, came to Bithynia and Pontus, as governor. In these districts, Christians were very numerous ; and his cool calculating cruelties resulted in many sore trials to the church. His first effort was to make himself acquainted with the principles of the sect, and he placed two slaves under torture to obtain his object. These poor souls told the truth in relation to the belief and practices of Christians, but the narrow mind and political bias of Pliny overlooked the innocence and purity of Christians ; and he looked upon the system as devised to control the conscience, that an extravagant and detestable superstition might be preserved. He, therefore, demanded a blind obedience

to the state, and when this was refused, he punished the offender with death. He regarded the martyrs as obstinate propagators of a *religio illicita*, which contravened the laws of the state.

Under such an administration, nothing more could be expected than serious impediments to the progress of religion. Pliny soon succeeded in reviving the Pagan services: heathen temples were again thronged, and every art practised to divert the public mind from Christianity. The administration was characterised, alternately, by mildness and severity, in order to reduce Christians to submission, and bring them back to the gods. Trajan believed Christianity to be a delusion, and approved the conduct of Pliny. He required that all who obstinately adhered to it, should be punished as innovators upon established usages, and offenders against the state; and, to that effect, laws were enacted, setting forth that Christianity would not be tolerated in the empire.

In the midst of Pliny's efforts, a serious difficulty presented itself to his mind. During the mild administration of Nerva, Christianity had spread in his province more than he had supposed, and he found that to punish all, multitudes must suffer. He wrote to the emperor that he might proceed with a proper understanding of his authority, and no doubt with a view of terrifying many whom he supposed would fear the emperor's mandate. This is his letter and Trajan's reply:



## PLINY TO THE EMPEROR TRAJAN.

"It is a rule, sir, which I inviolably observe, to refer myself to you in all doubts ; for who is more capable of receiving my scruples, or informing my ignorance ? Having never been present at any trials concerning those persons, who are Christians, I am unacquainted, and not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with the ages of the guilty, or no distinction is to be made between the young and the adult ; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon ; or, if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error ; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession, are punishable. In all these points, I am greatly doubtful. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians, is this : I interrogated them whether they were Christians ; if they confessed, I repeated the question twice, adding the threats at the same time ; and if they still persevered, I ordered them to be immediately punished. For, I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy, certainly deserved correction. There were others, also, brought before me possessed with the same infatuation ; but

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being citizens of Rome, I directed that they should be conveyed thither. But this crime spreading, (as is usually the case,) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An information was presented to me without any name subscribed, containing a charge against several persons: these, upon examination, denied they were, or ever had been, Christians. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites, with wine and frankincense, before your statue, (which, for that purpose, I had ordered to be brought, together with some of the gods,) and even reviled the name of Christ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians, into any of those compliances; I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned, indeed, that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue, and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain stated day before it was light, and addressed themselves in a certain form of prayer to Christ, as to some god, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adul-

tery ; never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up ; after which, it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to eat, in common, a harmless meal. From this custom they desisted, however, after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbid the meeting of any assemblies. In consequence of this their declaration, I judged it the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious functions ; but all I could discover was, that these people were actuated by an absurd and excessive superstition, I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all farther proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration ; more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least those which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented ; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived ; to which I must add, there is again, also, a general demand for the victims, which, for some time past, had met with few purchasers. From the circumstances I have mentioned, it

is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed, if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error.

## TRAJAN TO PLINY.

"The method you have pursued, my dear Pliny, in the proceedings against those Christians, which were brought before you, is extremely proper ; as it is not possible to lay down any fixed rule by which to act, in all cases of this nature. But I would not have you *officiously* enter into any inquiries concerning them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime should be proved, they must be punished ; with this restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Informations, without the accuser's name subscribed, ought not to be received in prosecutions of any sort : as it is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and by no means agreeable to the equity of my government."

It was under this emperor, that Clement of Rome is supposed to have suffered and died. He continued a faithful pastor of his flock until A. D. 98, when he was banished, and condemned to the most afflicting servitude. He was first sent to the marble quarries, where he was made to toil unceasingly, with a bare subsistence ; and afterwards removed to Crimea beyond the Pontic Sea, where he was subjected to the most

humiliating and degrading offices. Here, in these dreadful dungeons, criminals were made to suffer the greatest torments, *proxima morti pœna*. Their estates were confiscated, and forfeited to the exchequer, and they were doomed to perpetual slavery. Public marks of infamy and dishonor were placed upon them, such as putting out one eye; shaving one side of the head; disabling one leg; with a variety of the most shameful torments. Some writers suppose that Clement remained in the episcopal office until the third year of Trajan, while others affirm that while he was thus in exile, he was thrown into the sea, to prevent the influence which he was exerting upon all around him.

He was held in such great esteem at Rome by Christians, that after his death a splendid church was erected to his memory. This church, which was standing in the days of Jerome, is spoken of as a monument both of Christian regard and of architectural skill.

## CHAPTER IX.

### IGNATIUS.

**Birth and Parentage—Name—Disciple of St. John—At Antioch—Trajan's Appearance at Antioch—Popular Violence—His Arrest—His Desire to Appear—His Trial—Sentence—Journey to Rome—Sufferings—Attention of the Churches—Meets with Polycarp—Writes to Rome—Triumphal Procession—Arrival—Death—His Industry—Exhortations and Epistles—To the Asiatic Churches—Gnosticism—Evidences of their Antiquity—Bishop Pearson—The Duplicate Copies—The Version of 1497—The Twelve Epistles of 1557—The Spurious Writings—Archbishop Usher's Discoveries—Their Genuineness—The Epistles Controverted—Scope and Design—Style and Manner—Compared with Others—Doctrines—Knowledge of the Scriptures.**

THE birth place and parentage of Ignatius are entirely unknown ; it is true, some have asserted that he was a Sardinian by birth, but there is so little to support this opinion, that no certain reliance can be placed upon any account of his origin. Ignatius was also called Theophorus, Θεοφορος; but this was a term applied to all Christians—that is, temples of God, or *Christophori*, temples of Christ, and no doubt Ignatius applied this term to himself in that sense. The later Greeks supposed that Ignatius was called Theophorus because he was the child whom Christ took in his arms,\* and many writers have adopted this notion. Such a tradition could not have existed in the time of

\* Matt. xviii, 2. Mark ix, 36.

Chrysostom, for he was not of a disposition to overlook an event of this kind in the history of one of the fathers; on the contrary, in his homily on the martyrdom of Ignatius, he expressly states, that he never saw Jesus Christ.

The account given of his martyrdom, asserts that he was a disciple of St. John, with Polycarp, and no doubt became a zealous disciple of Christ, through his instrumentality. We find him in Antioch, growing in the esteem of the brethren, until A. D. 70, when he was made bishop of that church, over which he continued to preside for forty years; or until the ninth year of the emperor Trajan. The limited information which has reached us of Ignatius, is gathered from the account of his martyrdom, and his own writings. It seems that after Trajan's victory over the Dacians and Scythians, he came to Antioch, that all in that famous city who opposed his will, might be brought to the most perfect subjection. With regard to Christians, they were the objects of persecution before, but the presence of the emperor, aroused the most violent spirit on the part of the people against them; the better to express their loyalty to the emperor, and their attachment to the existing superstitious and idolatrous customs of the Romans.

Ignatius was pointed out as the leader of those Christians who opposed the will of the emperor, and his arrest was ordered. Some of his friends advised that he should retire, and thus elude the grasp of civil power, until more favorable times: but he pre-

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ferred to appear before the emperor, that he might have an opportunity of defending the cause of Christians, and of disabusing his mind of a variety of false reports which had reached him. No sooner had he appeared at the tribunal of Trajan, than the latter began to abuse him for his refusal to sacrifice to the gods. "What a wicked wretch," said he, "art thou, thus to endeavor to transgress our commands, and to persuade others also to do likewise, to their destruction." "But," says Ignatius, "no one ought to call Theophorus after such a manner, forasmuch as all wicked spirits have departed far from the servants of God. But, if because I am a trouble to those evil spirits, you call me wicked, with reference to them, I confess the charge; for having within me Christ, the heavenly king, I dissolve all the snares of the devil." Trajan asked him, "and who is Theophorus?" To which he replied, "he who has Christ in his breast;" "and we do not then seem to thee," inquired Trajan, "to have the gods within us, who fight for us against our enemies?" Ignatius replied, "you err, in that you call the evil spirits of the heathens gods. For there is but one God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom may I enjoy." "His kingdom who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?" inquired Trajan: Ignatius replied, "His who crucified my sin, with the inventor of it; and has put all the deceit and malice of the devil, under the feet of those who carry him in their hearts."



"Dost thou, then, carry him who was crucified within thee?" inquired Trajan: Ignatius answered, "I do: for it is written, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." When the emperor heard this, he became exceedingly angry, and would allow Ignatius to say no more, pronouncing the following sentence upon him:

"Forasmuch, as Ignatius has confessed that he carries about within himself, him that was crucified, we command that he be carried, bound, by soldiers, to great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts, for the entertainment of the people."

On the journey, that he was thus doomed to take, Ignatius was treated with great cruelty by the soldiers, who bound him in chains, and insulted and abused him in the most disgraceful manner. But these sufferings were somewhat relieved by the kindness and marked attention of the churches. As he passed through the several cities on his way, he was met by deputations chosen to attend him, and minister, as far as possible, to his comfort. At Smyrna he met with Polycarp, and his conversation and Christian character, impressed the church with his firmness and patience.

Ignatius rejoiced that he was called to suffer for the cause of Christ; and while Trajan and his admirers thought to break his spirit, or change his views, by sending him to Rome, to be exposed to wild beasts, they knew not the spirit of Christ that was in him. His only fear seemed to be that the attachment of his

friends at Rome to him, would seek to prevent the execution of his sentence, and rob him of a martyr's crown. He, therefore, wrote to Rome, from Smyrna, a most passionate appeal, exhibiting a spirit almost impatient to suffer according to the sentence of the emperor: and although his notions of martyrdom appear to be extravagant, yet, his humility, courage, and perfect resignation, exhibited his trust in the faithfulness of his Lord. As he passed from Antioch to Rome, such were the crowds of friends that attended him, that he seemed, although a condemned and degraded criminal, to be marching to Rome in triumphal procession. Reaching the city on the last day of the public spectacles, he was thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and with the same devotion to God, and firmness, which he exhibited throughout, he resigned himself to death.

On this journey, guarded by a rude Roman soldiery, who ill treated and despised him, he evinced the most astonishing zeal and industry. In every city through which he passed, he confirmed the churches in their faith, and wrote with the most surprising industry, both to the churches and his personal friend, Polycarp. It seemed as though the sentence of the emperor was designed to start Ignatius forth from Antioch to Rome on a mission of mercy, and make him, not only seal the truths of Christianity with his blood, but bring forth all his energies at once, to bless and strengthen the churches. Eusebius says, that "he confirmed the churches, through which he passed, by discourses and exhorta-

tions ; warning them most especially to take heed to the heresies which then first sprang up and increased."

While at Smyrna, he wrote four epistles ; one to each of the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome ; and from Troas he wrote three more to the churches of Philadelphia, and Smyrna, and to his friend Polycarp. The epistles which were addressed to the Asiatic churches, were designed to counteract the growing heresies of the Gnostics, and warn the churches of their danger ; the epistle to the Romans has no allusion to the subject of Gnosticism, it was written, as we have shown, to prevent that church from any interference in the execution of the sentence of death, which the emperor had passed upon him ; and to prepare the members for his reception.

These epistles all bear the marks of antiquity, particularly those portions which are directed against Judaism, and Doceism. It has been shown by bishop Pearson, that they were quoted without interruption by Christian writers, from the second, up to the fifteenth century. There are duplicate copies of these epistles still extant : that is, copies of a larger and smaller size ; the latter, it is supposed are the genuine. An old Latin version of these epistles, appeared about the year 1497 ; but in 1557, an edition of the writings of Ignatius was published, containing twelve epistles. There are in all, five Greek epistles, and as many more in Latin, which are accounted spurious productions ; and are now universally rejected. The spurious epistles are, *ad Mariam, Cassi-*

*bolitam, ad Heronem Antiochinum Diaconem, ad Philipenses*; and in Latin, one from the *Virgin Mary* to Ignatius, and his reply; two from Ignatius to *St. John*; and one from *Maria Cassibolita* to Ignatius. Archbishop Usher found the edition of 1557 to be incorrect. He discovered two Latin manuscripts, one of which, was in the library of Caius College, Cambridge, and the other in the hands of Dr. Richard Montacute, bishop of Norwich; by which he saw a material difference from the Greek edition, while they agreed with the quotations found in the writings of the early fathers. After this, another discovery was made of an ancient manuscript, in the Medician Library, at Florence, which closely corresponded with the Latin version, in the hands of archbishop Usher; this went far to settle the point of its genuineness.

The genuine epistles of Ignatius have been the subjects of much discussion among Protestant divines, on account of the dignity and authority which the strenuous advocates for the apostolic origin of episcopacy, suppose they confer upon bishops; and they have been assailed by divines of the opposite opinions, especially in Germany and Switzerland. These epistles contain so many passages, so often repeated, and so little in style and spirit with the whole composition, that there is every reason to believe that they contain interpolations which pervert the real sentiments of Ignatius. This too is supposed to have been done about the sixth century. The fact of the

existence of two separate copies, is calculated to throw doubt upon the genuineness of both ; but the shorter ones make a pretty fair claim to genuineness.

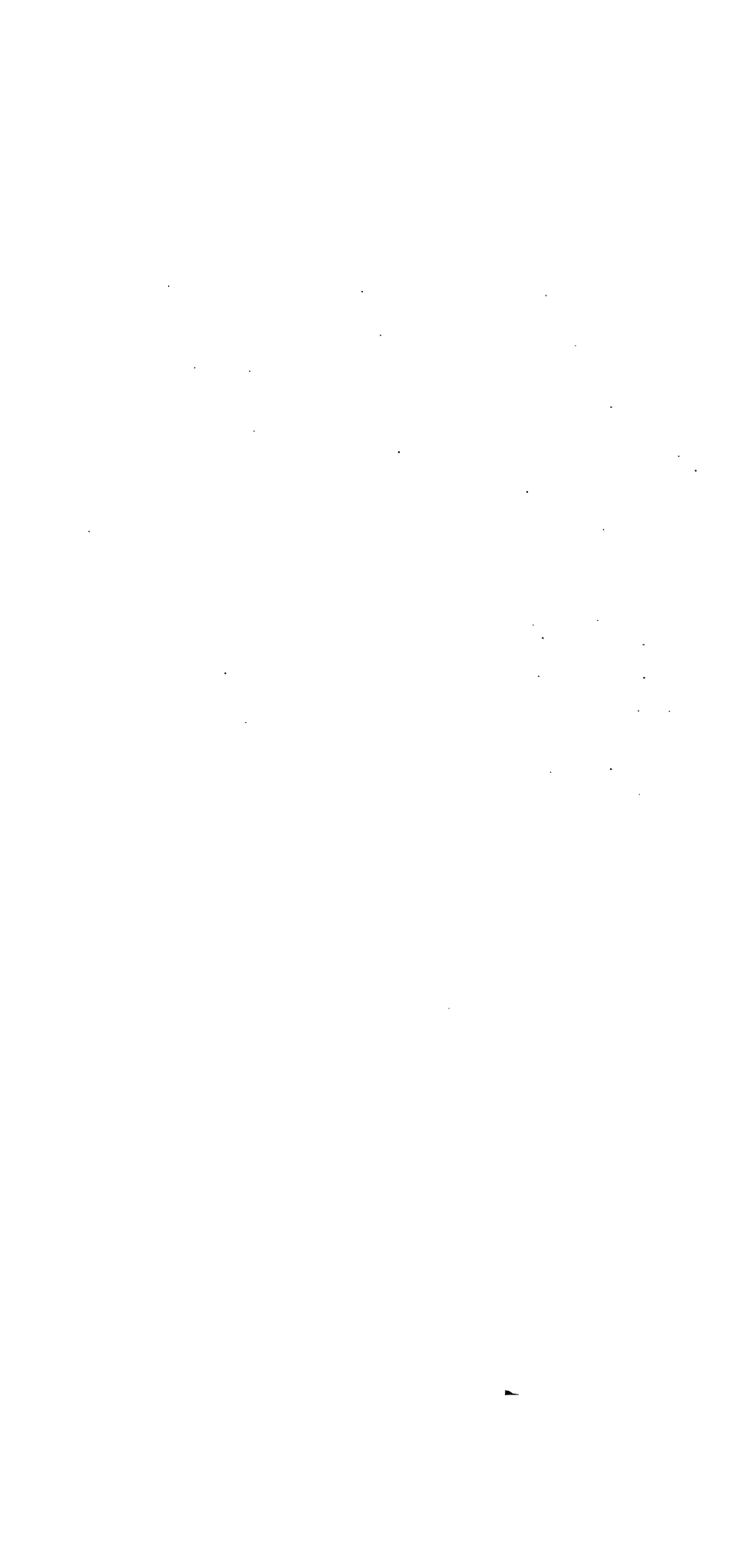
Many of the reasons for doubting the genuineness of the epistles may be removed, when the objectional sentences are understood, in connection with the scope and design of Ignatius ; and it may be shown, that instead of favoring the monarchical episcopal views as many isolated sentences appear to do,\* his great design was to promote the union of the church, and guard the flock from the heresies of teachers, who, to promote their views, endeavored to create dissensions in the churches. Besides, the style of Ignatius is harsh and unpolished ; and his manner ardent, with occasional admixtures of oriental exaggerations.

But whatever value we may place upon the epistles of Ignatius, they have less claim to *apostolic authority*, than many other productions of these times. His vehemence and oriental exaggerations, his eager desire for martyrdom, rushing, contrary to the advice of his friends, into the presence of the emperor, with the certainty of meeting the common fate of all who professed Christianity, and his deprecating the interference of the Roman Christians in his behalf, are greatly in contrast with the sober dignity and prudence of the venerable Polycarp, and still more so with the apostles ; none of whom *sought*, but *submitted* to death.

\* "Be subject to your bishop as unto Christ ;" *ad Trall.* c. 2. "Follow your bishop as Jesus Christ, the Father ;" *ad Smyrn.* c. 8, with many similar expressions.

Besides the above, the doctrines of the epistles are purely of a scriptural character, although there is no formal declaration or defence of Christianity, yet there is a clear expression of belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the union of the humanity with the divinity in his person ; the influence of the holy spirit, salvation by Christ alone, and the necessity of entire sanctification.

Ignatius quotes only one of the books of the New Testament by name, that is, St. Paul to the Ephesians ; but he uses terms and phrases, which show his knowledge of the entire New Testament, and a collection of the gospels especially.



## CHAPTER X.

### POLYCARP.

Birth, Slavery and Adoption—Disciple of St. John—Boculus—From Deacon to Bishop—Angel of Smyrna—Character of His Writings against the Gnostics—The Fathers of Asia Minor—Peacemaker—Selected to Visit Rome—Points of Disagreement—Easter Controversy—Incidentally Introduced—The Nature of the Dispute—Heathen Converts held no Festival—Time of the Celebration—The Controversy in 171—Victor's Excommunication of his Brethren—Polycarp and the Lapsi—Marcion—Life and Character—His Zeal—Conference with Polycarp—His Regret—Seeks to be Restored—Sources of Knowledge—Gnostic Errors—Polycarp's Epistle—Genuineness and Character—Doctrines.

Among the most distinguished Christians of the east, was the venerable bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp. It is supposed that he was born in the city of Smyrna, but, as we have no certain account, the place of his birth is mere conjecture. It is known, however, that he was a slave of eastern extraction; and his mistress, Callisto, who was a lady of fortune and noble family, who held him in great esteem; she adopted him according to the custom of that day, and left him her estate.

He is among the few Christian fathers, who enjoyed the society of the apostles. He was a catechumen of St. John, for Irenæus, writing, towards the close of his life, to Florinus, says, "when I was yet a youth in



lower Asia with Polycarp, when you were distinguished for your splendid talents, in the royal palace, and striving diligently to deserve his favor, I call to mind what took place there, more accurately than more recent events, for impressions made upon the youthful memory grow up and identify themselves with the very frame, and texture of the mind. Well, therefore, could I describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught; his going out and coming in; the whole tenor of his life, his personal appearance; the discourses which he made to the people. How would he speak of the conversations which he had held with John, and with others who had seen the Lord. How did he make mention of their words, and of whatsoever he had heard from them respecting the Lord." The bishop of Smyrna, Bocus, however, became his principal instructor in the faith, and Polycarp was, by him, selected for the offices of deacon and catechist, in the church of that city. Here, it is said, he made great advances in secular and spiritual knowledge, and won the affections of the whole Smyrnian church by his personal piety and untiring devotion to the spiritual condition of the people.

Polycarp remained, according to the best evidence we can gather, a deacon and catechist in the church, until the death of Bocus, when he was called to succeed him by the united voice of his brethren. It is stated, in the third book of Irenæus against Heresies, that Polycarp was "appointed bishop by the

apostle in Asia, in the church of Smyrna,"\* but the most prevalent impression is, that he was called to fill the office by the united voice of the church, but it is likely that St. John was consulted in reference thereto. Archbishop Usher is of opinion, that he was "the angel of the church in Smyrna;" addressed in the revelation of St. John, an opinion highly probable, from the fact, that Polycarp held the superintendence of that church at that time, when it is most likely St. John wrote.

The first prevailing tendency in the development of Christian theology, is strongly marked in the character and writings of Polycarp, his was of a realistic and practical Christian spirit. Surrounded as he was by theologians, who endeavored to build an idealistic theology upon the foundations of the Christian faith, he stood firm in an endeavor to defend the unchangeable groundwork of Christianity, against the Gnostic speculations; and his life and writings show how ardently he strove to maintain the apostles' doctrines against corruption, and sustain the relation of a true pastor to his flock. The first fathers in the church of Asia Minor, were animated by the spirit of Christ; in their struggles against the idealistic notions of the Gnostics, who now sought to introduce their corruptions, by taking Christianity for the basis of their speculations; but they often erred themselves, in their own notions of spiritual matters, being at times grossly sensuous in their conceptions of spiritual things;

\* Euseb. lib. iv, ch. 14.

not so, however, with Polycarp : for, while he was not distinguished as an eminent scholar, yet he was regarded as sound in faith and morals ; and known to possess a burning zeal for the prosperity of the church. This is more clearly seen in the fact, that he was the arbiter among church disputants, and employed himself in reconciling differences of opinion, and promoting peace in the different churches.

An occasion was soon presented for the development of these particular traits in the character of Polycarp. It seems to have been the custom very early, to select prominent and discreet individuals to visit those churches where a difference of opinion or practice existed, and endeavor to come to some understanding. Rome at this time presented some difference of opinion, and Polycarp was selected to pay a friendly visit to the church there, and bring about a mutual agreement, if possible. It is difficult to define all the points of disagreement between the church of Smyrna, and that of Rome. The Judaising, Orientalising, and Hellenising tendencies, must have made considerable inroads upon the simple usages of the church, as well as upon the inward life, threatening to corrupt its faith, and paralyse its energies. While a sensuous Judaism, would affect it upon the one hand, and the more so, on account of its more original connection ; yet, as Christianity spread among educated heathens, a free Gnostic conception was so consonant with their views, that no phenomenon of these times, could have had so general an influence on the theology of the church.

The Jewish Christians on the one hand, and the heathen Christians on the other, differed in relation to the celebration of Easter, and the bishop of Rome and Polycarp now discussed this matter in the most friendly manner. Whether it was part of the special mission of Polycarp or no, has been a subject of some discussion, but if we were to draw a just conclusion from the letter of Irenæus, given by Eusebius, upon this subject, the Easter controversy was not among the objects of Polycarp's visit, and was incidentally introduced now for the first time.

The difference consisted principally, in this, that the Jewish Christians retained the festivals, as well as an observance of the law, and applied particularly to the former, a Christian meaning. The passover of the Old Testament was easily transferred from a remembrance of earthly bondage, to the spiritual deliverance from sin. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ, by whom deliverance was wrought. They supposed that Christ had, in the last supper, with his disciples, celebrated a proper passover, at the very time the Jews were celebrating theirs : that is, on the night of the 14th, of the month Nisan. On the contrary, there was no festival among the heathen Christians from the beginning ; as it was evident that there is nothing in the New Testament to favor such an idea. It is true, that St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost ;" and some suppose, that this favors the idea, that the heathen Christians celebrated that festival ; but this is not a

legitimate inference, as St. Paul might have referred to a period well known to the Corinthians. The heathen Christians supposed that the typical feast was lost in its true meaning ; and that the Lord's supper had taken the place of the passover, the former being the feast of the new covenant, which had taken the place of the passover under the old ; as the old dispensation gave place to the new. They also contended that our Saviour did not celebrate his last supper on the night the Jews celebrated the passover.

Anicetus, the bishop of Rome, and Polycarp, became very tenacious about the time of the celebration ; and each was so convinced of the correctness of his position, that to use the language of Eusebius,\* "neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it, because he had observed it with St. John, the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles with whom he associated ; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, who said that he was bound to maintain the practice of the presbyters before him, which things being so, they communed with each other, and in the church, Anicetus yielded to Polycarp, out of respect no doubt, the office of consecrating, and they separated from each other in peace."

In 171, this controversy was conducted by Melito of Sardis, on the one hand, and Appolionaris, of Hierapolis, on the other ; but each celebrated their feasts according to their own views, without coming to an open rupture, until the time of Victor, bishop of

\* Lib. v, ch. 24.

Rome. Under this bishop the controversy was conducted with great spirit ; and the churches of Caesarea, Palestine, Tyre, Alexandria and Jerusalem, came to his aid. On the opposite side of the question, were Polycrates, and the bishops of Ephesus, assisted by the churches of Asia Minor. This resulted in no good to the church, but aroused the bad passions of these champions, for a point of faith which they supposed was of *great importance*. Victor finally renounced communion with his antagonists on account of their supposed heresies,\* and excommunicated some of the most pious and devoted ministers of Jesus Christ, from *his* communion.

Polycarp employed himself during this visit, with great diligence in the work of reclaiming many who had wandered from the faith ; or, who in the severe persecutions to which they were exposed, lost their confidence in God and were classed among the lapsi. In this good work he was very successful, and many were reclaimed from their wanderings. During his labors, among other incidents related of this devoted minister, is one which introduces to our notice, a Gnostic teacher of great celebrity, and who is supposed to have been previously on terms of intimacy with Polycarp. This individual was Marcion, the son of a bishop, of Pontus, who, according to Dr. Cave, in early life, fell in love with the monastic mode of life, but who had fallen into grievous sins, and was expelled from the communion of his own father. His enemies declare

\* Euseb. lib. v, ch. 24.

that he went to Rome in order to avoid the odium which his conduct had heaped upon him. This man's life, however, is involved in considerable obscurity, and much that has been said of him, is conjecture, to fill up gaps that history does not supply. He was born in Pontus, in the first half of the second century ; and, according to Epiphanius, his father was bishop of that church, but Marcion was a heathen, for the developments of his system teach, that he lived a heathen the early part of his life, and was afterwards converted to Christianity.

The nature of his opinions made him zealous to propagate them, and he went to Rome where he met with Cerdo, a teacher of the Syrian Gnostic opinions, to whom he joined himself ; and from whom he borrowed many opinions which completed his dogmatical system. Here he met with Polycarp, with whom he had been acquainted, and lived on terms of friendly intercourse, in Smyrna. Being desirous of renewing former friendships, he addressed him thus : "Dost thou know me, Polycarp ?" But as Polycarp regarded the opinions of Marcion contrary to the faith, and did not wish to give sanction to them, he replied, "Yes ; I know the first born of Satan !" This affected Marcion so much, that, according to Tertullian,\* he testified his regret at the schism he had formed, and sought admittance again to the communion of the church. After much discussion, this was granted, on condition that he would bring back all that had been

\* Tertullian, C. M. iv, 36, 9.

seduced away by him; but as he died shortly after this, he could not comply.

It was very natural from the state of church controversies at this time, for those deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel, to seek a clear conviction of the sources from which a knowledge of the Christian faith was to be obtained, for the sufficiency of the documents which the church had received was now questioned by the Gnostics, and a different source of knowledge of a secret character, pretended to be imparted by Christ to a few, and transmitted to a select number, was substituted. In connection with this, the modes of interpreting scripture were capricious and dangerous, for they led to the introduction of unbiblical meanings, and numerous deceptions. This caused the establishment, in some degree, of a logical and grammatical interpretation, and imparted to the church the germ of a biblical hermeneutic. It led also to the better establishment of a religious faith, disconnected with all mythology, and independent of a vain and deceitful philosophy. To these results the spirit of Polycarp greatly contributed, he may have been distinguished as a writer in his day, but the only work which has come down to us is, his epistle to the Philippians. This has somewhat the style and matter of the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and it forms an appropriate introduction to the epistle of Ignatius, for it was written expressly to accompany that epistle to Philippi, by the request of Ignatius.

The genuineness of this work of Polycarp's has never



been called in question, it is simple in its language, and pure in its doctrines. There are numerous references to the books of the New Testament, contained in it, and direct quotations from St. Paul's epistles to the Corinthians and Philippians; which go to show, that however it may be deficient in the philosophical discussions which agitated the Christian world, its author was well acquainted with the word of God. He discusses the doctrines of faith in Christ, salvation by grace, not by works, prayer, fasting, and the study of the scriptures. The ecclesiastical polity of the church is only incidentally mentioned; and he gives advice to deacons and presbyters, without leaving the slightest impression that there was any other order of ministers in his day, classing even himself with the presbyters.\*

\* See the Superscription to Epis. to Cor.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE EMPERORS AND CHRISTIANITY.

**Hadrian and Trajan—Change of Policy—Improvements of the Empire—Hadrian's Sagacity and Industry—The Apologists, Quadratus and Aristides—The Rescript—The Proconsul's Inquiries—Hadrian's Letter to Gracianus—Its Satire and Design—Success of Christianity—Antonius Pius—His Mildness—The Popular Outbreaks—The Emperor's Reproofs—Marcus Aurelius—The Crisis—His Purpose—Condition of the Empire—Ebullitions of Popular Fury—Persecutions in Asia Minor—Bishop of Sardis—Church of Smyrna—The Martyrs—Polycarp—His Prudence—Arrest—Conference with Herod and Nicetus—Result—The Trial—"Polycarp to the Lions"—Doomed to the Stake—His Prayer—Execution—The Martyrdom of Polycarp by the Church of Smyrna.**

FROM the occasional collisions of the new religion with the civil power under Trajan, it was now brought to the inspection of a more profound statesman. Although Trajan's conduct was somewhat tempered with humanity, being never very prodigal of blood, but prompt and decisive in his movements, yet Hadrian displayed more political sagacity with equally as much humanity, as any of his predecessors. Freed from the ambition for warlike enterprise and foreign conquest, so peculiar to his predecessors, he sought to improve the empire, and cement all parts together by the bonds of a common regard. The remotest provinces saw their emperor for the first time, not at the head of an army, but to defend and im-

prove their condition. Impregnable fortresses were constructed to defend the frontiers of the empire, while public works called forth the industry and enterprise of the people. His liberality enriched, and his policy benefitted his provinces; and peace showed its salutary influence upon civilization.

He was possessed of great political sagacity, and incessant activity. When with the army, he put himself upon a footing with the meanest legendary; in the opulent cities of the south, he was an epicure among the voluptuous; but his mind was ever active in investigating all the systems of philosophy and religion. At Athens he was the restorer of the beautiful temple of Olympus; and an initiated worshipper among the astonished votaries of the Eleusinian mysteries. In the east, he aspired to a knowledge of magic, and sought to penetrate the recondite secrets of that art, and became an adept in judicial astrology. With such an emperor, it was impossible that Christianity in its present state, and ultimate bearings, could escape the notice of his inquiring mind.

Dabbling with all religions, the enemies of Christianity sought to renew their persecutions at every opportunity, and especially when he became the awe-struck worshipper in the Grecian mysteries. But the respectful appeals of Christian apologists, were not repelled, and Quadratus and Aristides, in apologies for Christianity, called forth a rescript of protection against popular violence. This was particularly useful in some of the Asiatic cities, where the success of

Christianity had reduced their public assemblies, and interrupted their public exhibitions; for here latent animosities sought opportunities against Christians, and weak and superstitious magistrates often became the instruments of popular fury.

The proconsul, Serenus Granianus, sought information from the emperor in relation to the course to be pursued, which drew from him a letter, celebrated for a singular view of the state of the religious society of the empire, as it presented itself to Hadrian at that time. The edict itself, has been represented, as affording no farther protection, than that of Trajan's;\* but it is evident, that this rescript, guarded Trajan's law from the evasions so often practised to the injury of Christians, if it did no more. The letter was addressed to Servianus, the successor of Granianus, and contains many curious notions: among others, he says, "I found the people vain, fickle, and shifting with every breath of popular rumor. Those who worship Serapis are Christians; and those who call themselves Christian bishops are worshippers of Serapis: There is no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan,† no Christian bishop who is not an astrologer, an interpreter of prodigies, and an anointer. The patriarch himself when he comes to Egypt, is compelled, by one party, to worship Serapis, by another, Christ. \* \* \* They have but one God; him, Christians, Jews, and Gentiles worship alike." This is, evidently, a

\* Mosheim's Institutes, vol. i, p. 106.

† Dr. Burten suggests that these are the Gnostic followers of Simon Magus.

piece of malicious satire, designed to affect some Gnostic or philosophic theory, and show that all the religions were essentially the same, differing only in name, and that all employed the same arts to impose upon the people, and were of equal importance in the estimation of a true philosopher. With the humanity and long and peaceful reign of Hadrian, Christianity spread, and found access to many circles of society, which had hitherto stood aloof from its consideration.

Antoninus Pius succeeded with a mild and humane administration; but it was difficult to repress popular commotion during his reign, for calamities befel the people, which enraged them against Christians. Famine, flood, fire and earthquake, brought down the fury of the mob upon the now unprotected Christians; and whether Rome, Antioch or Carthage was the scene of disaster, it was alike fatal in its results upon them. The emperor issued his rescript to the cities of Asia Minor, in which he calls upon the Pagans to avert the anger of heaven which was exhibited in these public calamities, by imitating the piety of Christians, instead of denouncing them as atheists, but to no purpose.

Marcus Aurelius succeeded Antoninus Pius, and with him arrived a most dangerous crisis in the destiny of Christianity. He was a highminded competitor, but a most violent persecutor; and through a firm and unyielding purpose to bend the contumacious spirit of Christians to his authority, the martyr-ologies became more numerous, as well as more au-

thentic and credible. It could not, indeed, be supposed that he was the author of a systematic plan for the extirpation of Christians ; but by withdrawing the protection of former emperors, he gave loose reign to the provincial governors, and the outbursts of popular fury. During this reign, the Roman empire began to feel the recoil of a barbarism, hitherto repressed, which threatened civilization, and created a gloom and despondency in the minds of the people ; while inundations, earthquakes and pestilences, awoke them from their slumber of peace, and interrupted the long enjoyed internal prosperity of the empire.

The Lanuvian villa, was no longer a place of repose to the emperor. The peaceful pursuits of agriculture were to give place to the marshalling of legions ; and the conferences of jurisconsults, to the tactics of war. The halcyon days of the second Numa had fled, and the speculations of philosophy were unheeded. A desolating pestilence infested the whole Roman empire, and in alarm the people fled to their tutelary deities : superstition shuddered at the imaginary anger of the gods ; and deserted temples, neglected shrines, and the calamities which had driven the people to appease the anger of the gods, were now discovered to be on account of the existence of Christianity. This resulted in the most revengeful spirit ; and as the civil authorities favored the opposition, the ebullitions of popular fury were without a precedent. Such was the severity of the persecutions in Asia Minor, that the bishop of Sardis, a prudent

and dignified Christian advocate, thus wrote to the emperor: "The race of worshippers of God in Asia Minor are persecuted more now than was ever the case before, in consequence of new edicts, for shameless informers, thirsting after other men's property, now plunder the guiltless by day and by night, whenever they can find any ground for it in the edicts. And we object not to this, if it proceeds from your commands, for a just emperor would never act unjustly, and we willingly bear the happy lot of such a death; and we only make this petition to you that you would acquaint yourself with those who are thus persecuted, and judge fairly, whether they deserve punishment and death, or safety and tranquillity. If, however, this new decree, and this decision comes not from yourself, a decree which would be unbecoming against even barbarian enemies, we pray you the more earnestly not to suffer us to be a prey to such rapacity." This shows how the rescripts let loose the delators, to ravage the property of innocent Christians, and gratify their revenge with their blood.

The church of Smyrna was doomed to suffer, and their distinguished and venerable bishop fell a prey to the rapacity of the populace. The martyrdom of Polycarp obscured, in a measure, other victims of heathen superstition, so that only two others are known to us, out of the many that suffered at this time. One of these, Quintus, did not withstand the hour of trial, but deserted, even among the beasts in the arena; but Germanius, the other, was forced into the

conflict and fought manfully ; even amidst the entreaties of the proconsul to consider his age, he provoked the rage of a lion and gained a martyr's crown. Quintus, a Phrygian, who had urged others to throw themselves in the way of martyrdom, descended with apparent boldness into the arena, but the sight of the beasts overcome him, and on the very point of martyrdom consented to sacrifice. But all would not satisfy the populace, they cried out still the more, "let Polycarp be apprehended !" He was more distinguished than any Christian in the east, and had presided over the Smyrnian church with the greatest prudence and dignity.

In this threatening aspect of affairs, he deemed it unnecessary to expose himself, and submitted to such measures as his friends deemed prudent for his security. He, therefore, retired to a neighboring village, and when the place of his retreat was discovered, he removed to another village : but here the place of his concealment was made known by putting two slaves to the torture. When Polycarp heard that such was the fact, he resigned himself to his fate, exclaiming, "the will of the Lord be done." He met the soldiers who pursued him, and ordered food to be prepared for them, but requested time for meditation and prayer, which they granted. After he had spent two hours in these exercises, he was placed upon an ass, and in the midst of a great public concourse was conducted towards the city.

On his way he was met by Herod, the irenarch,



and his father Nicetas, who, out of respect for his age, took him into their carriage, under the impression that he could be persuaded to submit to the two tests required, and thus avoid a shameful death. "What harm," said they, "is there in saying, lord Cæsar, and in offering sacrifice, and so being safe?" Polycarp at first was silent, but they urged him so much the more, that finally he told them, "I shall not do as you advise." Their disappointment enraged them to such excess, that they thrust him out of the chariot, and such was the violence of the fall, that he was considerably injured ; but he was urged on to the stadium, now crowded to excess, and in the greatest tumult. His entrance, however, calmed the multitude, and they proceeded at once to try him. At this moment the Christians who were present, greatly excited in their devotions, conceived that they heard a voice from heaven, saying "Polycarp be firm !" He was entreated by the proconsul to disguise his name ; for the people were shouting aloud that Polycarp was apprehended. But he proclaimed aloud that he was Polycarp ; he was now told to "swear by the genius of Cæsar ; retract, and say, away with the godless." The aged saint gazed with pity upon the mass of spectators, rising one above another, eagerly looking upon him, and raising his eyes to heaven, he said, "Away the godless." The proconsul urged him farther, "swear, and I release thee ; blaspheme Christ." But he replied, "eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never done me an injury ; how then can

I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Again the proconsul urged him to swear by the genius of Cæsar ; but Polycarp replied, "I am a Christian," and requested a day to be appointed on which he might show that the tenets of Christians were blameless, and that they were persecuted wrongfully. "Persuade the people to consent," replied the proconsul, for he was compassionate and awed into reverence. "We owe respect to authority ; to thee will I explain the reasons of my conduct, to the populace I will make no explanation." Upon which he was threatened with the beasts. "'Tis well for me to be speedily released from this life of misery." He was threatened with the flames, when he again replied, "I fear not the fire that burns but for a moment, thou knowest not that which burns for ever and ever." The herald now advanced, and thrice proclaimed, "Polycarp has professed himself a Christian." But his countenance retained its serenity and he was unmoved ; and while the people cried out, "This is the teacher of all Asia, the overthrower of our gods, who has perverted so many from sacrifice, and the adoration of the gods ;" still he was full of peace and joy. A lion was now called for, "Let loose a lion upon Polycarp," was the cry from every part of the vast crowd ; but the president of the games announced that they were over. Here a general cry burst from the crowd that he should be burnt alive ; and they collected the fuel of the baths and other combustible materials, and raised a vast funeral pile. He was disrobed and led to the stake ; they complied

with his request, that he should not be nailed, but they bound him fast, and the smoke of the kindling fuel arose around him.

In this condition, he lifted up his voice to God, uttering the following prayer : "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of the well beloved and ever blessed Son, Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee ; the God of angels, powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before thee ; I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of thy martyrs, and drink of Christ's cup, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of body and soul, in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit ; among whom may I be admitted this day as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou, O true and faithful God, hast prepared, and foreshown, and accomplished. Wherefore I praise thee for all thy mercies ; I bless thee ; I glorify thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be glory now and for ever."

But the fire was kindled in vain, they could not make it touch his body, and he remained at the stake with the flames forming an arch over his head, to the amazement of the spectators. The Christian by-standers gazed upon him with wonder, while their high wrought devotions set their imaginations to work : some thought they saw a dove ascend from his body ; others viewed him as gold tried in the furnace ;

while others thought that the odor of burning frankincense and myrrh came from the fire. An executioner was sent to despatch him, when the blood that came from his body extinguished the flames.

The sorrowing church over which he presided, wrote the following account of his martyrdom to the Christians at Philadelphia, which bears the evidences of antiquity, and its genuineness has rarely been questioned.

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THE CIRCULAR EPISTLE OF THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA,  
CONCERNING THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

The church of God which is at Smyrna, to the church of God which is at Philadelphia, and to all other assemblies of the holy catholic church, in every place; mercy, peace and love from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied:

1. We have written unto you brethren, respecting the other martyrs, and (especially) the blessed Polycarp, who by his martyrdom has set, as it were, his seal, and put an end to the persecution. For almost all things that went before were done, that the Lord might show us from above a martyrdom such as became the gospel. For he expected to be delivered up, even as the Lord also was, that we also should imitate his example; considering not only our own interest, but also our neighbor's. For true and perfect charity desires not only that a man's self should be saved, but also all his brethren.

2. The sufferings, then, of all the other martyrs which they underwent, according to the will of God, were blessed and generous. For so it becomes us, who are more religious, to ascribe the supreme power over all things to him. And who, indeed, would not admire the greatness of their mind, their patience and love of the Lord ; who, when they were so torn with scourges, that the very structure of their bodies, to the inward veins and arteries, was seen, did yet endure it ; so that all that stood round pitied and lamented them. Others, again, attained to such a degree of fortitude, that no one uttered a cry or a groan, plainly showing to all of us, that those martyrs of Christ, in the same hour in which they were tormented, were absent from the body : or rather that the Lord stood by and conversed with them. Wherefore, being supported by the grace of God, they despised all the torments of the world, and after the sufferings of one hour, were redeemed from everlasting punishment. Whence even the fire of their cruel murderers seemed cold to them : for they had before their eyes, the prospect of escaping that which was eternal and unquenchable : and beheld, with the eyes of their heart, those good things which are reserved for them that endure, which neither ear hath heard, nor eye seen, nor have they entered into the heart of man. But to them, they were now revealed by the Lord, as being no longer men, but already become angels. In like manner, they who were condemned to the wild beasts, and kept a long while

(in prison) underwent many grievous torments: being compelled to lie upon sharp spikes, and tormented with divers other punishments, that, if it were possible, the tyrant might force them, by the length of their sufferings, to deny Christ.

3. The devil did, indeed, invent many things against them: but thanks be to God; for he prevailed not over all. For the brave Germanicus strengthened those that feared, by his patience, and fought gloriously with wild beasts. For when the proconsul would have persuaded him, telling him, that he should consider his age, and spare himself, he forcibly drew the wild beast towards him, being desirous the more quickly to be delivered from a wicked and unjust world. Upon this, the whole multitude, wondering at the courage of the holy and pious race of Christians, cried out, away with the wicked wretches; let Polycarp be sought out.

4. Then one named Quintus, a Phrygian, having lately come from his own country, when he saw the wild beasts, was afraid. Now this was the same man who forced himself, and some others, to present themselves of their own accord (to the trial.) Him, therefore, the proconsul induced, after much persuasion, to swear (by the emperor) and to sacrifice. *For which cause, brethren, we do not commend those who offer themselves, (to persecution,) since the gospel teaches no such thing.*

5. Now the most excellent Polycarp, when he first heard (that he was called for) was not disturbed

in mind, but determined to remain in the city. But the greater part (of his friends) persuaded him to retire. Accordingly he went into a little village, not far distant from the city, and there remained, with few others; doing nothing else, either by day or by night, but praying for all men, and for the churches throughout the world, according to his usual custom. And as he prayed, he saw a vision, three days before he was taken; and, behold the pillow under his head appeared to be on fire. Whereupon, turning to those who were with him, he said, prophetically, "I must be burned alive."

6. And when those who sought for him drew near, he departed into another village; and his pursuers came thither. And when they found him not, they seized upon two young men, one of whom being tormented, confessed. For it was impossible he should be concealed, forasmuch as they who betrayed him, were his own domestics, so the keeper of the peace, who was also magistrate elect, Herod by name, hastened to bring him into the lists: that so Polycarp might receive his proper portion, being made partaker of Christ: and they that betrayed him might undergo the punishment of Judas.

7. The officers, therefore, and horsemen, taking the young lad along with them, departed about supper-time, it being Friday, with their usual arms, as if they were in pursuit of a robber. And being come to the place where he was, about the close of the day, they found him in a small house, lying in an upper

Chamber, whence he could easily have escaped into another place ; but he would not, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." Wherefore, when he heard that they were come to the house, he went down and spake to them. And as they that were present wondered at his age and constancy, some of them began to say, "Was there need of all this care, to take such an old man as this?" Immediately, then, he commanded to be set before them, the same hour, to eat and to drink, as much as they would : desiring them to give him one hour's liberty, that he might pray without disturbance. And when they permitted him, he stood praying, being full of the grace of God, so that he ceased not for two whole hours, to the admiration of all that heard him ; insomuch, that many (of the soldiers) began to repent, that they were come out against so godly an old man.

8. As soon as he had finished his prayer, in which he made mention of all men who had ever been acquainted with him, whether small or great, honorable or obscure, and of the whole catholic church, throughout the world ; the time being come when he was to depart, they set him upon an ass, and led him into the city it being the day of the great Sabbath. And Herod, the keeper of the peace, and with his father Nicetes, met him in a chariot. And having taken him up to them, and set him in the chariot, they began to persuade him, saying, "What harm is there in saying, Lord Cæsar, and in offering sacrifice, and so being safe?" With other words, which are



usual on such occasions. But Polycarp at first answered them not; whereupon, as they continued to urge him, he said "I shall not do as you advise." They, therefore failing to persuade him, spake bitter words against him, and then thrust him violently off the chariot, so that he hurt his thigh in the fall. But he, without turning back, went on with all diligence, as if he had received no harm at all: and so was brought to the lists, where there was so great a tumult that no one could be heard.

9. Now as he was going into the lists, there was a voice from heaven, "Be strong, Polycarp, and quit thyself like a man." No one saw who it was that spake to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought in, there was a great disturbance, when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. And when he acknowledged, (that he was,) he persuaded him to deny, (the faith,) saying, "Reverence thy old age;" with many other exhortations of like nature, as their custom is, saying, "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent, and say, away with the godless." Then Polycarp, looking with a serene countenance upon the whole company of ungodly gentiles who were in the lists, stretched forth his hand to them, and said, groaning and looking up to heaven, "Away with the godless." But the proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will release thee: reproach Christ." Polycarp answered, "Fourscore and six years

**Have I continued serving him, and he hath never wronged me at all; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"**


10. And when the proconsul, nevertheless, still insisted, and said, "Swear by the genius of Cæsar," he answered, "If thou art so vainly confident as to expect that I should swear by what thou callest the genius of Cæsar, pretending to be ignorant of what I am, hear me freely confessing unto thee, I **AM A CHRISTIAN**. And if thou further desirest to know what Christianity really is, appoint a day, and thou shalt hear it." The proconsul replied, "Persuade the people." Then said Polycarp, "To thee have I freely offered to give a reason of my faith; for we are taught to pay to the powers and authorities, which are ordained of God, the honor which is due, provided it be not injurious to ourselves. But for the people, I esteem them not worthy that I should give any account of my faith to them."

11. The proconsul said, "I have wild beasts ready; to those I will cast thee unless thou repent." He answered, "Call for them, then: for we Christians are fixed in our minds, not to change from good to evil. But it will be good for me to be changed from my grievous (sufferings) to their just reward." The proconsul added, "Seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, I will cause thee to be devoured with fire, unless thou shalt repent." Polycarp answered, "Thou threatenest me with fire, which burns for an hour, and in a little while is extinguished; for thou knowest not the

fire of the future judgment, and of that eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt."

12. Having said this, and many other things, (of the like nature,) he was filled with confidence and joy, insomuch that his very countenance was full of grace, so that he was not only serene and undisturbed at what was spoken to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished, and sent his own herald to proclaim thrice, in the midst of the lists, "Polycarp hath confessed himself to be a Christian." When this was proclaimed by the herald, the whole multitude, both of the gentiles and of the Jews, which dwelt at Smyrna, being full of fury, cried out with a loud voice, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, who hath overthrown our gods, and hath taught so many not to sacrifice, nor to pay any worship to the gods." And so saying, they cried out and desired Philip, the president of the spectacles, that he would let loose a lion against Polycarp. But Philip replied, that it was not lawful for him to do so, since that kind of spectacle was already over. Then it pleased them to cry out, with one consent, that Polycarp should be burned alive. For so it was necessary that the vision should be fulfilled, which was made manifest to him by his pillow, when he saw it on fire as he prayed, and said, prophetically, to the faithful that were with him, I must be burned alive.

13. This then was done with greater speed than it was spoken; the whole multitude instantly gather-



ing together wood and faggots out of the work-shops and baths ; the Jews, especially, according to their custom, with all readiness assisting them in doing it. When the pile was ready, Polycarp laying aside all his upper garments, and loosing his girdle, endeavored also to loosen his sandals, which, aforetime, he was not wont to do ; forasmuch, as always every one of the faithful, that was about him, contended who should soonest touch his flesh. For he was adorned by his good conversation, with all kinds of piety, even before his martyrdom. Immediately, then, they put upon him the instruments which were prepared for the pile. But when they would, also, have nailed him to the stake, he said, "Leave me thus : for he who hath given me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile."

14. Wherefore they did not nail him, but bound him (to the stake.) But he, having put his hands behind him, and being bound as a ram, (chosen,) out of a great flock for an offering, and prepared to be a burnt sacrifice, acceptable unto God, looking up to heaven, said, "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee ; the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, (especially,) of the whole race of just men, who live in thy presence ; I give thee hearty thanks that thou hast vouchsafed, to bring me to this day, and to this hour ; that I should have a part in the number of thy mar-

tyes, in the cup of thy Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Spirit: among which may I be accepted this day before thee, as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, as thou hast before ordained, and declared, and fulfilled, even thou, the true God, with whom is no falsehood at all. For this, and for all things else, I praise thee, I bless thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, with whom, to thee and the Holy Ghost be glory, both now and to all succeeding ages. Amen.”\*

15. As soon as he had uttered amen, and finished his prayer, the men appointed for the purpose, lighted the fire. And when the flames began to blaze, to a very great height, a wonderful sight appeared to us, who were permitted to witness it, and were also spared, to relate to others what had happened. For the flames making a kind of arch, like the sail of a ship filled with wind, encompassed the body of the martyr, which was in the midst, not as flesh that was burned, but as bread which is baked, or as gold or silver glowing in the furnace. Moreover, we perceived as fragrant an odor, as if it came from frankincense, or some other precious spices.

16. At length, when those wicked men saw that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded the executioner to go near, and pierce him with the sword, which being accordingly done,

\* The conclusion of this prayer is differently expressed in Eusebius, who uses a later copy.

There came forth; so great a quantity of blood, as extinguished the fire, and raised an admiration among the people, to consider what a difference there is, between the infidels and the elect, one of which this admirable Polycarp was, being in our times, a truly apostolical and prophetical teacher, and the bishop of the catholic church, which is at Smyrna. For every word that proceeded out of his mouth, either is (already) fulfilled, or will (in due time) be accomplished.

17. But when the emulous, and envious, and wicked adversary of the race of the just, saw the greatness of his martyrdom, and considered how blameless his conversation had been from the beginning, and that he was now crowned with immortality, having, without all controversy, received his reward, he took care that not the least relic of his body, should be taken away by us, although many desired to do it, and to have a share in his holy flesh. And to that end, he suggested to Nicetus, the father of Herod, and brother of Alice, to go to the governor, and hinder him from giving his body to be buried: lest, said he, forsaking him that was crucified, they should begin to worship this Polycarp. And this he said at the suggestion and instance of the Jews, who also watched us, that we should not take him out of the fire; not considering that it is impossible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all such as shall be saved, throughout the whole world, (the righteous for the ungodly,) OR TO WORSHIP ANY OTHER. For

him indeed, as being the Son of God, we adore, *but for the martyrs, we worthily love them*, as the disciples and imitators of our Lord, on account of their exceeding great love towards their Master and King; of whom may we also be made companions and fellow disciples.

18. The centurion, therefore, seeing the contention of the Jews, put his body into the midst of the fire, and burned it. After which, we, taking up his bones, more precious than the richest jewels, and tried above gold, deposited them where it was fitting; where being gathered together, as we have opportunity, with joy and gladness, the Lord will grant unto us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have suffered, and for the exercise and preparation of those that may hereafter (suffer.)

19. Such were the sufferings of the blessed Polycarp, who, though he was the twelfth of those who, together with them of Philadelphia, suffered martyrdom, in Smyrna, is yet alone, chiefly had in memory of all men; inasmuch as he is spoken of, by the very gentiles themselves, in every place, as having been not only an eminent teacher, but also a glorious martyr. Whose death all desire to imitate, as having been in all things conformable to the gospel of Christ. For having, by patience, overcome the unjust governor, and so received the crown of immortality, he now, together with the apostles, and all other righteous men, with great triumph glorifies God, even the Fath-

er, and blesses our Lord the governor of our (souls and) bodies, and the Shepherd of the catholic church throughout the world.

20. Whereas, therefore, ye desired that we would at large declare to you what was done, we have, for the present, briefly signified it to you, by our brother Marcus. When, therefore, ye have read this epistle, send it also to the brethren that are more remote, that they also, may glorify God, who makes such choice of his own servants, and is able to bring us all, by his grace and help, to his eternal kingdom, through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; to whom be glory, honor, might and majesty, for ever and ever, Amen. Salute all the saints. They that are with us salute you: and Evarestus, who wrote this epistle, with his whole house.

21. Now the martyrdom of the blessed Polycarp, was on the second day, of the month Xanthicus, that is, the seventh of the calends of May, on the great Sabbath, about the eighth hour. He was taken by Herod Philip, the Trullian, being the chief priest, Statius Quadratus proconsul; but our Saviour Christ reigning for evermore, to him be honor, glory, majesty, and an eternal throne, from generation to generation. Amen.

22. We wish you, brethren, all happiness, by living according to the rule of the gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom, glory be to God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of his chosen saints: after whose example, the blessed Polycarp suffered;



at whose feet may we be found, in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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This epistle was transcribed by Caius, out of the copy of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who also lived and conversed with Irenæus. And I, Socrates, transcribed it at Corinth, out of the copy of the said Caius. Grace be with all.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SECTS AND HERESIES.

*Secta Alogos*, and *Ejionia*—The foundation of Heresies—Sensual Judaism and Pagan Christianity—The Union Maintained—The Zealots of both Extremes—Pseudo—Petrians and Pseudo—Pauline—The Loss of Jewish Identity—New Churches and Admixtures—Ebionites—Gnostics—Their Origin—Doctrine—Connection with Christianity—The *Γνῶσις* of the Alexandrian Jews—Cerenthus—Basilides—Valentinus—The Ophites—Antinomian Gnostics—Simonians—Simon Magus—Justin Martyr's Error—Marcion—Manicheism—The Injury of these Sects.

CHRISTIANITY found other enemies beside the civil power, and the mob ; for the state of the Jewish and Pagan world, favored serious perversions of its doctrines, and threatened its purity. Judaism, and the Pagan systems, so strongly exhibited their imperfections to the minds of the thinking and refined, that they were soon mingled with Christianity. Jewish doctors and Pagan philosophers held to their peculiar dogmas with great tenacity : many of them sought in the religion of Christ, something to complete their own systems, without relinquishing their tenets ; and they, therefore, soon founded a variety of sects, varying in their character, as the Jewish or Pagan opinions happened to predominate.

The word *secta*, and its corresponding Greek word *αἵρεσις*, implied the adoption of certain opinions, without attaching to them the disapprobation which is understood by the term *heresy*, in more modern times; and between these words, and the word *schisma*, or division, there is also a considerable difference. *Heresy* meant a difference in point of doctrine or ecclesiastical policy. Heresies were numerous without producing schisms in the body; and the differences of opinion were, in many instances, so great, as to leave but little Christianity, yet the church fellowship of the controversialists remained unbroken for a length of time. In the course of time, when the Christian and Jewish zealots were in warm dispute, a moderate party, being the most numerous, kept off a schism, but the two great extremes, finally succeeded in breaking up the power that restrained them, and every thing was drawn within their strife.

There were two great extremes which formed the foundation of numerous heresies, and opposed the purity of the faith, from the very introduction of Christianity: The one arose in the effort to bring every thing to the level of sense, and to rest wholly upon the material appearance of divinity; overlooking the spirit, it determined to have in Christianity, the human nature only. The other took the opposite extreme and spiritualized every thing; and excluded the human nature, having the divine only. Among the Jews, every thing was lowered to the level of

sense, which brought this extreme first into contact with Christianity, as Christianity arose necessarily out of Judaism, and it became the fruitful source of all those sects which mistook the spiritual and proper nature of the gospel, regarding it as a *perfected Judaism*.

Those churches which consisted entirely of Jews, professing Christianity, but adhering to the peculiarities of Judaism, formed a striking contrast to the churches of converted gentiles ; where the pure spiritual worship prevailed, without the sensuous observances which characterized the former. The Jews continued to hold, that sanctification might be obtained by ceremonial observances, and continued the observance of the ceremonial law ; but the heathen converts began at once with an outward amendment, even if the inward power of truth had not effected every thing necessary. It is remarkable, that with these differences, both classes looked upon each other as brethren, so that the communion of love and Christian fellowship was not broken ; in consequence, the tone and spirit with which the earliest writers met what they supposed to be errors, form a striking contrast with the more recent modes of treating differences of opinion in the church of Christ.

The Christian Jewish zealots, were the pseudo-Petrians, and the zealots among the converted heathens were the pseudo-Paulian. These appellations were derived from the apostolic leaders, whom these parties fancied they possessed ; and although the

apostles agreed in their principles, yet that agreement was far from being acknowledged by these parties; who saw in Peter, and his associate laborers in Palestine, on the one hand, nothing but an example of Judaizing Christianity; and on the other, in Paul, a reason for an entire freedom from the law, and their Gnostic notions. The pseudo-Petrians maintained that no person could be allowed equal rights with the Jews, in the blessings of Christianity, unless he embraced the Mosaic law, in all its extent; they denied to Paul the character of an apostle; for, in their opinion, those only were apostles, whom Jesus instructed during his life upon earth. On the other hand, the zealots, among the heathen Christians, disregarding the law, rejected the Old Testament to a considerable extent, and claimed St. Paul as the only apostle. These zealots inflamed the church, and stirred up the worst passions, so that parties began to question each other's Christianity.

The church at Jerusalem, according to Eusebius, was obliged, during the Jewish war, to take refuge beyond the Jordan, and for more than a century consisted of Christians of Jewish descent; these, unitedly, continued in the observance of the ceremonial law. This law, notwithstanding the difference which existed in their doctrines, formed an outward bond, which united them together; and this union was only broken up, by an outward circumstance of a peculiar character. A rebellion broke out under Barchochab, which caused Hadrian to expel the Jews from the neigh-

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borhood of Jerusalem, for they had become objects of the jealousy of the Roman governors; this caused a great number to take refuge among the heathen Christians, that they might avoid the decree of Hadrian, by thus losing their identity, and at the same time retain their Christianity : and these finally formed the church in the heathen colony *Ælia Capitolina*, which sprang up on the site of old Jerusalem. Others threw off all Jewish distinctions, and formed themselves under an organization separate from the heathen Christians.

Those churches which continued in these observances, were distinguished by the name of Ebionites, although this name originated with an ascetic sect of Jewish Christians, distinct from the rest of this class, but it was finally applied to all Judaizing Christians. These Judaizing Christians, according to Irenæus, considered Christ a man like other men, who, by the decree of God was appointed to the office of Messiah; and was solemnly dedicated by John, who represented Elias; they regarded him as endowed with divine power, for the performance of the duties of his office; they considered circumcision necessary, in order to participate perfectly in the kingdom of God, and that Jerusalem was again to be rebuilt, and become the city of God. Justin Martyr says, "There are some of our people, who acknowledge him to be the Messiah, and yet consider him a man, born of a woman; with whom I do not agree : and the greater number, also, being of my opinion, do not say this; for we are

commanded by Christ not to follow the doctrines of men ; but to hold that which has been proclaimed by the holy prophets."

The sects which sprang from an admixture of oriental theosophy with Christianity, and which belonged to the other extreme, were the Gnostics. Prior to the existence of Christian sects, certain professors of oriental philosophy borrowed from the Greeks the name of Gnostics, to express their pretensions to a more accurate and extensive knowledge of the divine nature, than was possessed by other philosophers. In confirmation of the Pagan origin of this name, St. Paul alludes to it in one of his epistles to Timothy, where he warns him against "the opposition of false science,"\* and also to the Colossians, where he warns them against "a vain and deceitful philosophy."† This heresy seems to have been of Egyptian origin, from whence it passed into Syria and Asia minor, where it infected the church about the reign of Nero ; having had an existence in the eastern schools long before the introduction of Christianity.

These Gnostics maintained, that from the infinite fountain of Deity, originated, by a succession of emanations, all natures, both intellectual and material. From this fountain they conceived all orders and varieties of natures to flow ; at the most remote extremity of which proceeded evil demons, with all the natural and moral evils of the world. They conceived these

\* 1 Timothy vi, 20. † Colossians ii, 8.

emanations to be divided into two classes; the one included the powers which are contained in the divine essence, which made up the plenitude of the divine nature; the other included all finite and imperfect natures, and, of course, with reference to the divine essence, existed externally. Within the divine essence, they imagined a long series of principles of a real and substantial existence; and they included within this series, the Maker of the world, (*Demiurgus*,) but so far removed from the source of being as to be allied to matter, yet capable of acting upon it.

The mystical genius of this singular fabrication may be supposed as easily to connect this fanciful system with Christianity, in a variety of modes, as to originate the absurdities it contained; Gnosticism, Judaism, and Christianity, were singularly blended together in some instances; and Gnosticism and Christianity in others. The Gnostic branch of Christian sects were different from the narrow and carnal dispositions of Judaism, which cleaves to outward observances and comprehends every thing, by the senses only; Gnosticism claimed unbridled license to speculate on the divine nature, and idealize every thing; and stretching beyond the limits of the world and earthly existence, it essayed to build up a system of realities, by the use of shadows. Yet as widely different as were the systems, and far apart as were the extremes, in those days of singular incongruities, they were found in some way connected. The Jewish divines of Alexandria employed the term *γνῶσις* (*gnosis*, know-




ledge. In a widely extended phraseology; they applied it to a deeper insight into the nature of the *inner* connection with the externals which Christianity taught. Engrafting itself upon Judaism, Gnosticism taught that the development of the theocracy was *gradual* in man, proceeding from one original source.

Cerintus was a teacher of this character; he lived in Ephesus in the time of St. John, and was of great notoriety: but it is difficult to determine with accuracy, the true nature of his doctrine, on account of the striking contradictions found in history respecting them. Irenæus describes him as a complete Gnostic; but other writers, particularly Cains of Rome, about the end of the first century, and Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, about the middle of the third century, ascribe to him the carnal notions of Judaism; these apparent contradictions are probably reconciled, when we learn from what can be gathered from his doctrines themselves. He undoubtedly taught an admixture of Judaism and Gnosticism, with Christianity, and was the founder of a sect. He maintained that the world was created by a subordinate power, as angels; who did not know, or were very imperfectly acquainted with the power to which they were subjected. He supposed that there existed several orders or grades of angels, at the head of which he maintained there was one who was appointed to preside over them; and that the Mosaic law had been revealed by means of this angel. He re-

garded Christ as a superior man, who by his superior qualities, was chosen as the Messiah: that his office was first revealed to him in his baptism by John, at which time, he was furnished with the powers necessary for the fulfilment of its duties; when the supreme *Logos*, or spirit of God, descended into his heart. According to Cerinthus, this fitted him to be the great teacher and placed him above angels, in wisdom. He denied both the sufferings and the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and supposed that he could not die, and that he was taken up with that spirit in the ascension. He held that the Mosaic law was perpetual, and was of opinion, that a thousand year season of happiness, was to take place in Jerusalem, as the central point of the regenerated earth.

Basilides was a Gnostic teacher, who flourished in the first half of the second century, he was an Egyptian by birth, but confined his labors to Alexandria. The foundation of his system, was the doctrine of *emanation* and *dualism*; with a variety of views peculiar to himself, by which he attempted to build up a Christian system. Almost all the ancient philosophers admitted *two* principles in nature, one active and the other passive, but they differed as to the manner in which they conceived these principles to subsist. Plato, and the old Academy, taught that God and matter were essentially different, and eternally opposite, having no common principle by which they could be united, which is *dualism*. But others, who were convinced that nature consisted of two principles,

found it encumbered with the difficulty, that these were comprehended in one universe, and they found it necessary to have them united by an essential bond, so that God was represented as sending forth matter, which was brought into form by the energy of his own mind, this was the foundation of *emanation*. Such was the system of Basilides, who placed what he was pleased to style, "the hidden God," at the head of emanations, who was above all representation. But he believed also in a substantial evil being, and was charged by Clement of Alexandria, with having deified the devil. His dualistic system caused him to conceive of the existence of an empire of darkness and light, of the divine, and that which was not. On one side of this empire, were placed light, life, soul and good; and on the other, darkness, death, matter and evil; these answered to each other, and maintained the opposition which he supposed to exist in the universe. Without following Basilides through his peculiarities, he permitted the fundamental doctrine of redeeming grace, to have its essential place in his system, and hence brought forth an element in the doctrine of redemption, foreign to Ebionitish views; but he was like Cerinthus in not admitting the divine nature of Jesus from the first; and he supposed that Jesus was not the Redeemer but the instrument of the redeeming God. He believed that every one suffered for his sins, or for the evil in his nature; according to his system, every sin, whether before or after faith and baptism, must be atoned



for by suffering. Faith, according to the Jewish Christian notion, operated as a mere outward traditional belief without any corresponding fruits; but, according to Basilides, faith was an inward thing, "an entire bent of the inward life; an entrance of the spirit into a higher sphere, and a *real communion with that higher system*;" but considering, like all Gnostics, religion in its contemplative, rather than its practical character, he receded from the genuine notion of faith. He also taught that man should free himself from the foreign admixture of his nature, which controls and disturbs him, in order to a free and full development of his original character.

Contemporary with Basilides, was Valentinus, he was born an Egyptian, of Jewish origin, and educated in Alexandria; but he passed the latter part of his life in Rome, where he became more notorious by extending his doctrines, and propagating them in that region; and they soon spread through Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor. This fanatic taught a system very much resembling the Jewish Cabbala, many parts of which were no doubt borrowed from it, although Irenæus, and many succeeding writers, supposed it to have an origin in Grecian philosophy. He supposed the divine nature to be a vast abyss, in which existed *Æons*,\* as emanations from the fountain of being, of a variety of orders and degrees, the source of *Æons*

\* *Æon*, with Basilides, was an order of emanation, the Redeemer being the highest of that order; but with Valentinus, *Æon* was the power by which God puts the resolves of His wisdom into execution.

he called *Bython*; and a union between *Bython* and a principle, which he called *Ennoia*, produced *Nous* and *Aletheia*; and in succession from these, *Logos*, *Anthropos*, and *Ecclesia*; from whom Jesus Christ was placed among the most remote descendants, and the Creator of the world below Him. This Creator of the world, *Demiurgus*, he conceived held a middle place between the material world and God. The doctrine of redemption had an essential place in the system of Valentinus; but while Basilides removed it just beyond the region of practical things, Valentinus placed it so far in the speculations and metaphysics of his fanciful genius, that it was veiled in an obscurity almost impenetrable. There was no very essential difference between Valentinus and Basilides, except in the modes employed to explain them, and the images which their imaginations had conjured to develop their ideas. There were many men of great reputation who sprang up from the Valentinian school, and the sect had an existence for a considerable time.

A second class of Gnostics were the Ophites, who held the same ideas, but by some slight turn, raised entirely different propositions. They held a kind of Pantheistic doctrine of the soul of the world; and light, as the source of spiritual life; and hence, as they brought this forward in greater prominence, the essential doctrines of Christianity receded the more. The Ophitic system only exhibited how the same fundamental principles may, at the same time, be con-

ceived and applied in different modes, as the Christian, Jewish, or purely oriental and theosophic elements happen, from circumstances, to predominate. The Ophites, as a class, were divided ; as some did not claim to be Christians, but, on the contrary, abhorred Christ ;—and it was necessary to curse Him, before persons could be admitted into the assemblies of such ;\*—but the majority engrafted their peculiarities upon Christianity, and claimed the name of Christians.

The Antinomian Gnostics opposed themselves to the inward nature, as well as the outward letter of the law ; and taught that Christianity gave unbridled license to all the passions and appetites of man. Such are the systems of Carpocrates, and his son Epiphanes. The Nicolaitans, whom Irenæus names as existing in his day, belong to this class of Gnostics. He makes Nicholas, the deacon, their founder, and finds their portraiture in the second chapter of the Revelation of St. John the divine. But as the passage to which he alludes, relates to such persons as seduced the Christians to partake of the heathen feasts at a sacrifice, and the name itself means *destroyer*, or *seducer of the people*, it is not likely that Irenæus is correct. It is true, however, that their doctrines were equally *hateful*, for they taught that man must conquer his evil propensities by giving himself up to them ; and affect an indifference to his lusts and evil desires ; and abuse his flesh by its own instrumentality, to exhibit his contempt for those evil desires.

\* Origin C. Celo. lib. vi. c. 28.

Clement of Alexandria, whose historical criticism can be more relied upon than that of Irenæus, makes this sect claim unjustly Nicholas as their founder, and attributes to him a spotless life.

There was an eclectic sect called Simonians, who, although not an easily defined class, yet were a distinct sect. The difficulty of defining them consists in this, that they were not always the same in some respects, while they had some features to which they all adhered. They were sometimes attached to heathens, sometimes to Jews, and sometimes to Samaritans; and they were sometimes strict ascetics, and then again despisers of all law. But they all considered Simon Magus as the form assumed by the redeeming spirit; and had pretended books relating to their Gnosis, or higher wisdom. Simon Magus was a forged name, there having been no such founder of a Christian sect; and the importance given to him among writers of the early church, is undeserved. He has become a mythical personage, the representative of the whole theosophic and goetic character of those days,\* and has given rise to the most important and singular fables. Justin Martyr seems to attribute to him a real existence in his second Apology;† he there appeals to the fact that there was a statue at Rome to this Simon Magus, with the inscription, *Simoni Deo Sancto*; but when the place indicated by Justin was examined, the pedestal of a statue, which bore the inscription of "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio Sacrum," was

\* Irenæus, l. c. † Apology, ii. p. 69, 91.

found, which explained his mistake, and proved that it had been dedicated to a Roman Sabine deity, and not to Simon Magus. There is no doubt but the name was borrowed to give importance to the sect, as Simon Magus was a Goeta, or Magician, who had found great favor even with the higher classes.

Marcion was a Gnostic teacher of another turn of mind, as he opposed the speculation which was the prevailing characteristic of Gnosticism. He was more Christian than any of this class, and his peculiarities consisted chiefly in his distinctions of the god of nature and of the Old Testament, and the God of the gospel. As it was in Christ that he first found his God, he was not able to find in nature what he had found in grace. He was a zealous opponent of all the artificial modes of interpreting Scripture, and advocated that literal interpretation which the Gnostics opposed. He thought Judaism too carnal, and as he could not find the God of the New Testament there, he concluded that the Old Testament could not have proceeded from the same source with the gospel; and his method of strict literal interpretation, contributed to this rejection of the Old Testament.

Marcion taught that there were three sources of all things, a good God, a just God and matter. That Jesus Christ revealed the good deity, who was before unknown, to free man from the yoke of the just deity; and that good and evil were found in these two, with Christ, whose aim it was to free man from damnation by the revelation of the good. He taught that there



were different degrees of perfection, and required of a perfect Christian a strict ascetic life. Marcion so altered St. Luke's gospel, as to make it answer his system ; and he also corrupted the epistles of St. Paul. He wrote a work entitled "Antitheses," in which he contrasts Judaism and Christianity.

But the school of Marcion was divided into a number of sects, who added to their systems the notions of other Gnostics, or the peculiarities of Valentinus, where they supposed the original deficient. The Marcionite Marcus embraced the doctrines of the Syrian Gnosis, in which they believed that God had imparted to man some of his own nature in creation ; but that man had lost it by sin. This was foreign to the views of Marcion, for his system taught that Christ had revealed the God of goodness to man, who was unallied to the divine supreme until his appearance. On the other hand, Lucernes, another Marcionite, taught that every thing belonging to man was perishable, but his spirit, which had become a participant of the divine nature, and was, therefore, immortal.

Another of the Marcionites was Apelles, who leaned to Valentinus, and although he essentially differed with the opinions of that school, yet he changed from the Marcionitish views, or added thereto in favor of some of those of Valentinus ; his views no doubt, from his residence in Alexandria underwent a change more in favor with the Gnosis of that school. He conceived that the Old Testament came from

different sources, partly from divine revelations and partly from evil spirits; and that it was his province to select such as was good, rejecting the bad. He differed from Marcion, therefore, in allowing a connection in any sense between the Old and New Testaments.

Appelles was held in but little esteem by Tertulian, who represents his private life as very immoral. He was certainly very superstitious, for a certain woman by the name of Philumene, who fell into wild and enthusiastic fits, he accounted a prophetess, took great pains to note down her sayings, and attempted an interpretation of her incoherent expressions.

Although the Gnostic sects maintained themselves in the east for many centuries, yet the power of the truth as it is in Jesus, triumphed over their obnoxious speculations. The struggle which that truth had with such views, tended to develope more clearly the meaning of the chief doctrines of Christianity; and, although the Manicheism of the third century was but a revival of the previous Gnostic notions, in a different mode, yet it is evident that they possessed a clearer development of Christianity than their predecessors under a different name, and made more use of the Christian system, if it had not the profitable tendency which that system required.

These sects, raised principally upon the foundations of superstition, enthusiasm, and imposture, proved the occasion of much mischief to the Christian religion, and impeded greatly its progress in the world.

Many designing leaders endeavored to reconcile Christians with heathenism, while they sought to confirm Pagans in their attachment to their old superstitions; and the consequence was, that the pure and simple doctrines of the gospel were adulterated by an admixture of Pagan ideas and opinions; and the church became a field of strife, and a nursery of error.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SPURIOUS WORKS.

Alexandrian Jewish Gnostics—Their Mode of Interpretation—The Epistle of Barnabas—Its Antiquity—Sanction of the Fathers—Doubts not Removed—Some other Barnabas—Its Connection with Polycarp's Epistle—Written after the Destruction of Jerusalem—The Account of Barnabas—Epistle Favored by the Alexandrian Fathers—Character of its Teachings—JHT—Shepherd of Hermas—The Hermas of Rom. xvi, 14—Hermas, Brother of Pope Pius—Athanasius and Catelarius—Tertullian and Jerome reject it—Letter of Christ to Abgarus—Where Found—Its Instrumentality in Edessa—Abgarus to Christ, and the Reply—Epistle of the Virgin Mary—St. Paul to the Laodiceans—St. Peter's Works—Those Ascribed to St. Matthew—Other Spurious Productions.

THE heresies of these times drew forth numerous spurious productions, of which a passing notice has been made ; but, as some of these form an interesting feature of history, and an important place in the critical researches of Christian antiquity, they may properly form the subject of a separate and more minute examination.

The Alexandrian church was infested with a class of Jews, whose education in Alexandria prepared them for a spiritual conception of Christianity ; but whose Gnosticism led to the idea, that especial wisdom was to result from a fanciful and mystical in-

terpretation of the Old Testament. This mode was more in keeping with the views of Philo than the teaching of St. Paul, and not at all admissible as the production of true Christian teachers; much less as inspired productions, to be classed with the epistles of the New Testament.

Among such, great zeal was exhibited, and improper means were employed to propagate their peculiar views of Christianity; hence we find a catholic and hortatory epistle, circulated among the churches, evidently from the pen of an Alexandrian Jew, but having the signature of Barnabas, the fellow traveller of St. Paul. Such a name best suited the designs of the writer, as it gave sanction and authority to his peculiar views, because Barnabas was a Jew, whose labors seemed to be directed mainly to the conversion of his brethren; and who, if the testimony of antiquity can be relied upon, was in Alexandria with St. Mark.

This epistle is confessedly of very ancient date, and comes down to our day with the impression of some of the most distinguished fathers that it is genuine; but there are evidently doubts of its character, that were never attempted to be removed until a more recent date. It is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, both in his *Stromata*\* and in his lost books of *Hypotyposes*, as Eusebius clearly asserts.† Origen calls it the Catholic epistle‡ of Barnabas, without expressing any doubt about it, as he does when he quotes other

\* Vid. Cotelier. *Testim.* v. pp. † *Eccles. Hist. lib. vi. c. 13, 14.* ‡ *Lib. 1. contr. Celsum.*

Apocryphal books, such as those of Hermas. But Eusebius, while he reckons it among the scriptures of the New Testament, tells us that it was rejected by many; and Jerome places it among the Apocryphal books\* and does not allow it a place among the collection of scriptures, on account of the uncertainty of its authority.

Some writers regard this work as the production of a person by the name of Barnabas, but not the Barnabas of the scriptures; but in what age he lived no one has informed us. In several Greek manuscripts it is continued on after the epistle of Polycarp, but in all those where this is the case they are imperfect copies of both epistles. It is certain that this epistle was written some time after the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, as may be seen by a reference to the 13th chapter, where the writer says: "And again he speaketh after this manner: Behold, they that destroy this temple, even they shall again build it up. And so it came to pass; for through their wars it is now destroyed by their enemies, and the servants of their enemies build it up." If Barnabas had been living after the departure of the apostles, we certainly should have had some authentic account of him, and the evidence of the genuineness of the epistle could have been made out by its connection with his history; but this is not the case.

It is true that we have an account of him, but it is as little to be relied upon as the epistle itself. The monk

\* Catalog. Scriptor. Eccles. and lib. xiii, in Ezech. ch. 48.

in Surius, who wrote the acts of Barnabas,\* states, that he spent the remainder of his life in endeavoring to convert the Jews in Lesser Asia to Christianity. This writer represents him as going to Syria at the instance of certain Jews of Salamis; and that while in a synagogue, disputing with them at night, he was cast out and stoned to death. But he asserts that Barnabas appeared twice after his death to the bishop of Salamis, to direct him to the discovery of his relics, and that when the discovery of his precious remains was thus made, the emperor Zeno commanded a splendid church to be built over the place of his burial. It is also stated† that he was discovered entombed, with the gospel of St. Matthew, written in Hebrew, laying upon his breast, in a state of perfect preservation. This tale, however, was evidently gotten up by Anthemius, patriarch of Cyprus, to get the better of Peter, the patriarch of Antioch, by which means he preserved his privileges against Peter, and obtained a confirmation by the emperor, of the independence of his see; a circumstance which gave rise to the famous Cyprian privileges; for the same thing was afterwards obtained for Justinian, at the instigation of the empress Theodora.

It will be observed that those fathers who favor this epistle, were of the Alexandrian school, who indulged in the allegorical mode of interpretation, and whose peculiar views were, in some measure, aided by this letter; as it is a fanciful interpretation of the

\* Alexandr. Monach. Encom. Barnabæ. † Alex. Monarch loc. citat.

Old Testament, at variance with the character of the Mosaic law, and the spirit of the gospel of Christ. It represents Moses as speaking general truths in a symbolical form, but the Jews as carnally minded, and in consequence, receiving every thing literally ; that an evil angel had guided them to a misconception of the whole ceremonial religion, and that it had become adulterated through evil spirits by foreign admixtures. It denies that circumcision is a seal of the covenant, because the writer says that it is found among idolatrous nations ; and he teaches that Abraham in the circumcision of three hundred and eighteen men had prefigured the crucifixion of Christ ; thus, "For the scripture says, that Abraham circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his house. But what, therefore, was the mystery that was made known unto him ? Mark, first the eighteen, and next the three hundred. For the numeral letters of ten and eight, are JH, and these denote Jesus. And because the cross was that by which we were to find grace ; therefore he adds three hundred ; the note of which is T, (the figure of the cross,) wherefore, by two letters he signified Jesus, and by the third his cross." This explanation which is founded upon *Greek letters* and *numerals*, could not apply to Moses, and is only suited to an Alexandrian Jew, ignorant of the Hebrew language, and acquainted with the Old Testament only through the Alexandrian translation. But Barnabas, the fellow laborer of St. Paul, was a Jew, acquainted with Hebrew, and of course would not have been



guilty of so foolish a translation of the Hebrew scriptures.

The epistle is evidently directed against carnal Judaism, and such as differed with the Alexandrians upon the character of Christ, for it particularly insists that Christ is not only the son of man, and the son of David, but the son of God. . Throughout the work there is not the least allusion to the writer, to lead us to suppose that it was Barnabas; indeed it is most likely that the author designed to conceal his real name, and send forth his production without intending to let it be known who he was; but as many were anxious to give it authority, they falsely reported that Barnabas was the writer, and this report is known to have originated in Alexandria.

The shepherd of Hermas is a personage equally mysterious. An effort has been made to place him among apostles, and class his work among inspired writings; because it is not only a work of very ancient date, but because it deals in such materials as suit the genius of those who advocate its authenticity.

That there was a Hermas at Rome when St. Paul wrote to the Romans, the xvi, 14, of that epistle, is sufficient evidence; but that this was the author of the work, is doubtful in the extreme. Origen, in his homily upon the text above named, says that this was the author of the visions; and Eusebius,\* that such was

\* Hist. Eccles. lib. iii, 3. Yet both Origen and Eusebius state the doubts which were entertained in relation to its genuineness, and show that on that account it was not admitted as canonical.

the received opinion in his day. But the author of the poem against Marcion, under the name of Tertullian, ascribes it to Hermas, the brother of pope Pius; and advocates of the same opinion are found in the pretended decretals of the ancient bishops of Rome, with the martyrologists Bede, Ado and others. This difference of opinion was most strangely attempted to be reconciled by cardinal Baronius, who supposed that the pope's brother, and the Hermas of St. Paul were the same; and that he lived one hundred and sixty-four years after Christ, and was one hundred and thirty years old when he died! But there is an evident mistake about this matter, in the Roman martyrology, for there is observed the annual commemoration of two by the same name; one of whom is styled the pastor, whose memorial is on the 26th of July, and that of the other Hermas on the 9th of May.

Athanasius quotes these visions as being among the books of scripture, and in the monastery of St. Germain in France. Catelarius found it in the same catalogue with the inspired writings; as well as in several of the old stichometries. This writer has published from the manuscripts in the king's library the epistle of Barnabas, which is placed immediately before the Revelation, and the visions of Hermas and the Acts of the Apostles after the Revelation. But Jerome exposes the folly of this work;\* Tertullian rejects it with scorn, and Origen† mentions others, who despised its authority.‡ Some charged it with favoring the Arian he-

\* Comment in Habac. † De Pudicitia ch. x. ‡ Philocal c. i.

resy, others that it favored the Novatian, while some say, that its fabulous and foolish parts are interpolations. Many favored it because they supposed that it opposed Montanism; and no doubt this influenced Tertullian, in some degree, in his severe censures of the work.

In connection with the works which we have thus named, there remain to us many other productions of very early date, circulated with the object of propagating some peculiar error or opinion which sprang up, and which have found their way partially or entirely down to our times. These are mostly productions which originated during the first and second centuries; and, as the archbishop of Canterbury says, may be divided into three ranks; the first are antecedent to any of the productions of the Christian fathers, as they are writings falsely ascribed to Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles; the second are those falsely ascribed to such as lived in apostolic times; and the third are imputed to the Christian fathers of more recent date.

Among the first is the pretended letter from Christ to Abgarus, king of Edessa, a little city of Arabia. Eusebius\* informs us that he found this letter in the archives of Edessa, written in the Syriac language, which he translated himself. The tradition is, that this letter was the instrument in the conversion of that city to Christianity,† and that there was an impression of the Saviour's face accompanying the letter, which

\* Hist. Eccles. lib. i, 13. † Evagrii Hist. Eccle. lib. iv, 27.

he sent to Abgarus; and which was so effective in the defence of the city, that when Chosroes, king of Persia, attempted to take it, the impression dispersed their foes, and saved their city. The patrons of images among the Greeks contend with great warmth for the truth of this account,\* and they have instituted a particular festival in memory of the occurrence, on which occasion they recite the account of it which is found inserted in their Menæon.

The following are these pretended letters :

#### THE EPISTLE OF ABGARUS TO JESUS CHRIST.

Abgarus, prince of Edessa, to Jesus the good Saviour, who has appeared in the country about Jerusalem, health :

I have received an account of thee, and thy cures, how without any medicines or herbs they are done by thee. For report says that thou makest the blind to see, the lame to walk; that thou cleanseest the lepers, and castest out unclean spirits and devils, and healest those who have labored under long diseases, and raisest up the dead.

And having heard all this concerning thee, I have concluded with myself one of two things; either that thou art God, and that being come down from heaven, doest all these mighty works; or that thou art

\* Gregorius Abulpharius Hist. Dynast. Lat. p. 71.

the Son of God, seeing thou art able to perform such things.

Wherefore, by this present letter, I entreat thee to come unto me, and to cure me of the infirmity that lies upon me. For I have also heard that the Jews murmur against thee, and seek to do thee mischief. For I have a small but fair city, which may be sufficient both for thee and me.

THE ANSWER OF CHRIST TO ABGARUS.

Abgarus, thou art blessed, in that though thou hast not seen me, thou hast yet believed in me. For it is written, concerning me, that those who have seen me should not believe in me, that so they who have not seen me, might believe and live. As for what thou hast written unto me, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that all those things for which I was sent, should be fulfilled by me in this place: and that having fulfilled them, I should be received up to him that sent me.

When, therefore, I shall be received into heaven, I will send some one of my disciples, who shall both heal thy distemper, and give life to thee and those that are with thee.

The letters ascribed to the Virgin Mary are equally spurious, and as there is not the least semblance of truth to sustain them, it is only necessary to pass to

the consideration of such as were circulated in these times as productions of the apostles or evangelists, or composed by the whole college of apostles.

Of the former, the epistle to the Laodiceans ascribed to St. Paul, obtained considerable notoriety ; and was said to be occasioned by an expression in the epistle to the Colossians,\* which seems to show that the apostle had written such an epistle to the Laodicean church. St. Paul directs them to read the epistle from Laodicea, but this may have been, as Chrysostom and Theodoret say, the epistle to Timothy, or an epistle to some other church which was directed to be sent to Laodicea, or it may have been the epistle to the Ephesians ; as that is known to have been ascribed in some of the original manuscripts to the Laodicean church ; and Tertullian sharply reproves Marcion, the Gnostic, for changing the title of this epistle. But the epistle itself cannot be ascribed to St. Paul, as it is a barefaced compilation of other epistles with interpolations, and was not recognised by Eusebius or Jerome, or by any one entitled to a respectful consideration.

Eusebius tells us that there were ascribed to St. Peter, a work called the Acts, a Gospel, and the Preaching and Revelations of St. Peter ; but there is nothing remaining of them but a few fragments, and some quotations made by ecclesiastical writers from them. But there are still remaining two books under the appellation of Discourses of St. Matthew, a liturgy

\* Col. iv. 16.

and a discourse concerning the nativity of the Virgin Mary, all ascribed to St. Matthew without any shadow of authority. There were many other spurious writings, but having no weight or importance, it is not necessary to examine their merits; it may, however, be interesting to the reader to know that besides those we have named, there were the following works, acknowledged as spurious, but of considerable antiquity: the history of the life, miracles and assumption of St. John, by Prochorus his disciple, and one of the seven deacons chosen by the church at Jerusalem; the histories of St. Peter and St. Paul, by Linus, one of the first bishops of Rome: the lives of the apostles ascribed to Abdibus, bishop of Babylon, and supposed to have been written by him in the Hebrew language, and the epistle of St. Martial, with other forgeries of more recent date.

The liturgies ascribed to St. Peter, St. Mark, and St. James, although they were the ancient liturgies of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, after the monarchical episcopal ascendancy, yet no learned man now contends that they were productions of the apostles.

The apostles' creed and the apostolic canons, said to be the production of the whole college of apostles, are known to be spurious, as an event so important to Christianity as a convention of apostles to settle a creed for the whole church in the form here laid down, would not have been overlooked by St. Luke; besides, in the ancient church, we find such a diversity

of creeds said to be apostolic, that it would be impossible to determine which was the true one, had such an event taken place in the history of the apostles.

It is remarkable how those who desired to propagate doctrines, not in accordance with the inspired writings, and impose an ecclesiastical polity averse to the primitive simplicity of the church, sought to be sustained when it was discovered that they had no warrant from God ; and it is thus, by the most outrageous means, that the doctrines of men have been taken for, and imposed upon the church as the oracles of God.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### JUSTIN MARTYR.

**His Birth and Parentage—Travels—His Examination of Philosophical Sects—Attachment to Plato—Retirement for Study—Interview with Polycarp—The Refutation of his Errors—His own account of this Interview—His Study of Christianity—Impressed by the Martyrs—Embraces Religion—Retains the *τρίβων*—Attachment to Platonism—His Views of the *λόγος*—Same Views at Alexandria—His Arminian Views—Goes to Rome—A Presbyter—Opposed to Gnosticism—His Apology—Its Contents—Goes to Ephesus—Dialogue with Trypho—Its Character—Returns to Rome—Controversy with Crescens—Second Apology—The Occasion of this Apology—Its Value—Crescens Procures his Arrest—His Trial and those who were with him—His Death and Burial.**

FLAVIUS JUSTINUS, was born A. D. 100, in ancient Sichem of Samaria, now Flavia Neapolis. It was formerly a Roman Greek colony, in which the Greek language prevailed. His father, who was a Greek, of the colony transplanted there, was a man of wealth and influence. Justin very early in life exhibited a thirst for knowledge, and his father determined to give him a philosophical education. With this view he sent him abroad, that by visiting the chief seats of learning, and making himself acquainted with the masters of the schools, he might the more readily and thoroughly acquaint himself with the learning of the times.

He travelled extensively, but on reaching Alexandria in Egypt, he determined to seek, in that famous city, from the best masters, a comparative view of the different systems of philosophy ; not so much with a view of selecting one most suited to secular pursuits, as to attain a satisfactory religious persuasion ;—a turn of mind which now became very common among the better classes. Here the stoics first drew his attention and he submitted himself to one of their greatest masters, but as speculation was not a prominent characteristic of his mind, he looked in vain to this system for a development of the nature of God ; and his teacher, as he informs us himself, endeavored to impress him with the belief that this was not necessary. Disgusted, therefore, with this instructor and the philosophy of the stoics, he turned his attention to the Peripatetics. In procuring an instructor of this sect, such was their manifest covetousness, that he soon concluded they were not in possession of the truths which he sought. The Pythagoreans were next introduced to his notice, but they required that he should be previously acquainted with music, astronomy, and geometry ; which led him to see that there was something unsuitable in these preparatory studies to the accomplishment of his object, and he abandoned all farther effort to acquaint himself with their philosophy.

Having now much solicitude in relation to his course, he procured a teacher of the Platonic philosophy, and as the nature of his inquiries partook

of a religious, more than a speculative character, Plato reasoned for him better than any he had found.

That he might study without interruption, he now withdrew to a retired place near the sea, where Providence threw in his way, during a solitary ramble, the venerable Polycarp; at least, it is thought to have been Polycarp by most of the learned, and Justin concludes that he had been a disciple of the apostles. This stranger discovered no small acquaintance with the opinions to which Justin was at that time attached; for he used, with great familiarity, Platonic principles and language, to conduct him to the more pure and perfect system of Christianity. Justin gives the account of this interview in the following language: "As I was walking near the sea, I was met by an aged person, of venerable appearance, whom I beheld with much attention. We entered into conversation; and upon my professing a love for private meditation, the venerable old man hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation, abstracted from practice: this gave occasion for me to express my ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger, by degrees, endeavored to cure me of my ignorant admiration of Plato and Pythagoras; he pointed out the writings of the Hebrew prophets as much more ancient than any of those called philosophers; and he led me to some view of the nature and of the evidences of Christianity." After saying many other things this stranger left him, when, says Justin, "I saw him no more; but immedi-

ately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets, and for those men who are the friends of Christ; I weighed within myself the arguments of the aged stranger, and in the end I found the divine scriptures to be the only sure philosophy.”\*

Thus introduced to religion, he studied it, not only at the sources to which this Christian teacher directed his attention, but he narrowly investigated the lives of professing Christians; and while the former developed those glorious truths which no system of philosophy could impart, the latter demonstrated its excellency and power. He saw that power displayed, in enabling Christians to lay down their lives with joy, while philosophy gave no such strength or consolation. He says, “while I was myself still delighted with the philosophy of Plato, I used to hear the Christians calumniated; but I saw that they fearlessly encountered death, and all that is most formidable to other men, I was convinced that these men could not be living in wickedness or sinful pleasures. For what man who was subject to his passions, and to intemperance, or delighted to feed on human flesh, would dare to embrace death, which would put a period to all his delights? Such a man would strive by all means to preserve his present life; would endeavor to conceal himself from those in power: least of all would he offer himself for punishment; I despised the opinion of the multitude; I was proud of being a Christian, and I endeavored, with all my

\* Dialog. cum Trypho.

might, to remain one.”\* Under those impressions, he embraced religion about the year 133.

Some suppose that he was not as strongly attached to the Christian religion as many of his coadjutors, on account of his retaining, after he became a Christian, the philosopher's cloak, the *ἑρπῆς*; this, however, could be no certain indication of undue attachment to opinions which he had renounced, as it was not an uncommon practice; and he might have looked upon it as a matter of indifference, or used it as a means of more readily introducing to others the religion of Christ. There is, nevertheless, some approximation in his writings to the Grecian, and especially to the Platonic philosophy; from which he may have been the precursor of the celebrated Alexandrian fathers. He retained a strong attachment to the Platonic notions, but his heart was not to be confined within such limitations, for he experienced, and afterwards taught a doctrine which passed the bounds of this system. He applied his knowledge of philosophy to the defence of Christianity; and, no doubt, fell into the errors of some apologists of his times. He conceived many points of resemblance between Platonism and Christianity, and concluded that whatever was valuable in the former, was either transmitted to Plato by tradition from Moses, and the Jewish prophets, or by inspiration from the Logos, or first emanation of the divine nature; and might justly claim a place among inspired writings. Accord-

\* Apology, ii, p. 50, and i, p. 51.

ing to his opinions, all good doctrines proceed from the Logos, and on that account, belong of right to Christians. His opinion was, that every degree of intelligence which men possessed respecting God, and the relation they sustained to him, was derived from the *λογος* (Logos,) a portion of divine reason, which was communicated to them ; and that the true believer in Christ possessed this quality in perfection. He uses the word *λογος* in different senses, sometimes to denote the second person in the trinity, sometimes for *reason* or intelligence ; and frequently for *word* or *speech*.

It is manifest that the views of Justin, in regard to the revelation of the Logos, were entertained by the Alexandrian teachers who succeeded him, and that they exerted a controlling influence over the theological disposition of that school ; although they would naturally result to a Platonist, seeking a medium between *his* philosophy, and the doctrines of Christianity.

Some historians seem to charge Justin as the first to introduce notions, not altogether in keeping with the spirit of the gospel, not only in his views of the revelation of the Logos, but in "confounding together two things perfectly distinct ; the light of natural conscience which God has given to all men ; and the light of divine grace peculiar to the children of God."\* And they charge him in this particular, with mingling heresy with Platonism ; but while we can

\* Milner's Church Hist. vol. i. chap. 3, cent. 2.

**a**gree with such historians, that about this time is seen **t**he beginning of the decay of the first spiritual effusion, **y**et it is certain that those views of Justin, as taught by **A**rminius in later days, in relation to the free will, were **n**either philosophical, nor inconsistent with revelation. **H**e says, "The law pronounced the curse upon all **m**en, because no man can fulfil it in its whole extent, **D**eut. xxvii, 26 ; Christ freed us from this curse, by **b**earing it for us," and thus taught a plan of redemption, which in its application, was co-extensive with **t**he curse or the law. Whatever may be laid to the **c**harge of this great man, it certainly can never be **m**ade to appear that the doctrines thus taught, could result from engrafting heathen philosophy upon Christianity.

About the beginning of the reign of Antonius Pius, Justin went to Rome. Here he could employ his talents with advantage, in defending the Christian religion among those who understood the Greek language. Some suppose that he was a presbyter, from the expression which he employs in relation to the sacrament of baptism, where he seems to include himself in the following language : "We conduct the convert, after we have baptized him, to the assembled brethren ;"—and he informs us, that while at Rome, he taught in a private house, which was customary with presbyters in those days. But whether he was a regularly acknowledged minister of the church or not, he was a travelling evangelist, in philosopher's attire, spreading the knowledge of Christ wherever



he found opportunity. Besides preaching in his own house in Rome, he wrote a confutation of the Antinomian Gnostics, directed against Marcion, and another against all the heresies of his day, but they are lost, and we only know that they had an existence, and an influence at that time in the church.

About the year 135 or 140, he wrote an apology for the Christians, to the emperor, Antonius Pius, which is thought to have had considerable influence upon that emperor's political conduct. It was written to show the absurdity of the methods, by which their heathen adversaries attacked Christianity, to show the power of their religion, and to overcome the common vices of the day.

He also separates the true faith from heresy, and denies that the lives of heretics are to be justly charged to the effects of Christianity; but that they grow out of a perversion of its great truths. He shows the reason why so small a number of Jews embraced Christianity, and points out the fact, that it was foretold by the Jewish prophets, that such should be the case. He describes the modes of worship, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to refute the arguments which were urged against these assemblies of the people; and his reference to these subjects shows, in an important degree, the usages of the church in his day.

It was not long after this apology was written, that we find him at Ephesus, where he wrote his memorable dialogue with Trypho the Jew. The object of

**this** was to prove that Christ was the true Messiah promised in the Jewish scriptures, and to confute the common calumnies circulated by the Jews against Christians. Justin's garb caused Trypho to address him in a retired walk, and a discussion arose about God, which Justin turned to a conversation respecting the truth of the Christian religion.

Trypho was a Jew, who had been driven out of Palestine by the war, and who was at that time travelling through Greece, where he had studied the Grecian philosophy, and was much esteemed by all classes. His conversation with Justin, shows the state of the controversy at that time, between Jews and Christians, and comes to the present day with undoubted evidences of its genuineness.

Upon his return to Rome, we find him in serious contact with the Cynic philosopher, Crescens, a man who exhibited the most uncompromising hostility to Christian doctrine; doubtless, because it attacked the abominable vices to which he was notoriously addicted. Justin offended him by his first apology, and was brought into personal controversy with him, so that he now became his determined enemy. The emperor, Marcus Aurelius, was indefatigable in his opposition, and Justin determined to address to him an apology, for the Christians; hoping to soften his mind and change the current of opinion, which was much against the church.

We have placed this as his second apology, although in most of the copies it is styled the first;

and it has been difficult to determine which has the best claim to priority, although it is a matter of comparatively little importance. The apology itself, however, is testimony, that an error has occurred in addressing this apology to Antonius Pius, and styling it the first instead of the second. He speaks, for instance, of the death of Christ, as occurring one hundred and fifty years before, of the death of Antonius Pius himself, and quotes from the other apology, which is conclusive in showing that it was certainly in existence when this was written.

In addressing to the emperor a defence of Christianity, a circumstance of great interest determined his course ; and drew from him the most able document which appeared upon this subject, up to the close of the second century. The occasion was this : a woman of notoriously vicious character, became a convert to the faith, and she immediately set about the work of converting her husband, that she might not be any longer the sharer of his vices ; for she soon discovered that she could not withdraw from the shameful practices to which she had been accustomed, in connection with him. Being unsuccessful in every attempt to reform him, and having determined to extricate herself from every obstacle to a religious life, she procured a divorce. The divorced husband sought revenge, and informed upon her as a Christian, which caused her arrest. The accused petitioned for delay in the judicial investigation, that she might have time to arrange her affairs, in-

forming the emperor, that then she would willingly appear for trial. This was granted, and the enraged husband finding that his object was delayed, turned against her religious instructor, whose name was Ptolmæus. He was brought before the prefect, Urbicus, where he openly confessed that he was a Christian, and was condemned to death. Lucius, another Christian, who was standing by at the time, said to the prefect, "Wherefore have you sentenced to death this man, who has committed no murder, no theft, no adultery; but only because he is a Christian? You are acting in a manner which is not becoming, either the emperor, or the philosopher, the son of the emperor." He was asked if he was a Christian; which, when he confessed, caused him to share the same fate; and a third, who stood by, was condemned in the same summary manner.

This apology is valuable, as a specimen of the manner in which the first Christians defended themselves against their heathen adversaries; and the arguments are forcible and conclusive. He attacks his adversary, Crescens, most likely, in order to destroy his influence with the emperor, for after adverting to the occasion of writing the apology, he says, "And I also expect, by persons of this sort, to be murdered, perhaps by Crescens, the pretended philosopher. For he deserves not the name of a philosopher, who, with a view of pleasing many deceived persons, publicly accuses Christians of atheism and impiety, though he himself, be totally ignorant of their real

character. I, Justin, have interrogated him and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the subject; I am willing to undergo an examination before you, in company with him. And my questions and his answers, will make it evident to yourself, that he knows nothing of our affairs; or, at least, conceals what he does know." This apology had little influence with the emperor, as he was not disposed to yield any point; and, as Justin had predicted, Crescens procured his imprisonment. He was brought before Rusticus, the prefect, who had succeeded Urbicus, and who was a stoic of considerable eminence, as he had been tutor to the emperor; and whose services Marcus acknowledged to have been of considerable advantage to him. Rusticus undertook to persuade Justin to sacrifice to the gods, and obey the emperor, but he so clearly defended the doctrines of his religion, and so fully proved the unsatisfying nature of the learning and discipline of the masters of his time, that Rusticus inquired, in what kind of discipline he had been educated; he told him, that, although it was fashionable to despise Christianity, yet he had found in its teachings and discipline, more pleasure and profit, than in all the other systems of the world, and it was in this he was educated. "Wretch!" replied Rusticus, "art thou captivated with *that religion*?" Justin replied, "I am, I follow the way of Christians, and they are right in doctrine." "What is their doctrine?" asked the magistrate, Justin replied, "We believe the one only God to be the Creator

of all things, visible and invisible; and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old, and that he is now the Saviour, teacher, and master of all those who are duly submissive to his instruction, and that he will hereafter be the judge of mankind. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite deity: this was the business of the prophets, who, many ages ago had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world." "Where do the Christians usually assemble?" asked the prefect. The God of the Christians is not confined to any particular place. "In what place do you instruct your scholars?" Justin named the place in which he dwelt, and informed him that there he explained Christianity to all who resorted to him. There were six other Christians arrested at the same time, and the prefect severally examined them also, after which, he turned to Justin and said, "Hear thou, who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in possession of truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven." Justin said, "although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Christians; as I know that the divine grace and favor is laid up for all such, and shall be so while the world endures." Rusticus again asked, "Do you think that you shall go to heaven and receive a reward?" "I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it, which excludes all doubts," was the

reply. Here the prefect insisted, that they should all go together and sacrifice to the gods. "No man," replied Justin, "will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety." Urbicus said, "Unless you comply you shall be tormented without mercy," but, he replied, "we desire nothing more sincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Hence our happiness is promoted ; and we shall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by divine appointment, the whole world must appear." The others assented, and said, "Despatch quickly your purpose, we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." The governor then pronounced this sentence. "As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws." They were led back to the prison full of joy, and when, in execution of the sentence, the whip was applied, they rejoiced, and to the last were strong in faith, giving glory to God. Their friends procured their bodies, and had them decently interred.

## CHAPTER XV.

### TATIAN AND OTHER AUTHORS.

Justin Martyr as an Instructor—Tatian, his Pupil, a Gnostic Teacher—His Apology—His Description of the Philosophical Opinions in Vogue—His Address to the Heathens—Origin of his Speculations—His Principal Errors—Writes on Christian Perfection—Charged with Altering the Text—The Spirit of Church Teachers in this Age—The Rise of Convents and Monks—The Character given to the Priest—Asceticism—Efforts to Excel Philosophers—Tatian's Doctrines—Dionysius of Corinth—His opposition to Austerities—His Letters—Athenagoras an Apologist—Anti-Gnostic Party—Theophilus—His Writings—Hegesippus—His Ecclesiastical Events—Milito, Bishop of Sardis—His Apology—Claudius Appollinarius—Gnostic Sects and Diversity of Opinions call into activity Church Teachers.

As an instructor in theology Justin had many admirers, and there accompanied him to Rome, a Syrian, by the name of Tatian, who was a sophist by profession, but who, through Justin's instrumentality, was converted to the Christian faith. This man is regarded as a Christian father; but he flourished as a Gnostic teacher, of a remarkably imaginative mind, and indulged in the wildest speculations. While Justin lived, his influence prevented the power of his imagination from gaining an ascendancy over his judgment; and it was not until after Justin became a martyr, that he gave loose reign to foolish speculations, and adopted the most wild and fanatical opinions.



Before he had given himself up to the speculations of philosophy, he was as ardent in the cause of Christianity as he became afterwards in pursuit of his errors. As an evidence of which, he wrote an apology for the Christian religion, entitled *Oratio ad Græcas*, which, although it breathes the spirit of oriental philosophy, yet it sets forth the development of the Christian doctrine in his own experience. Influenced by systems which he had examined, he shows, notwithstanding, that Christianity had a fast hold upon his affections, and he determined to defend it against the attacks of enemies. His errors, too, induced practices in his own life, which show the sincerity of his belief, and the ardor of his faith.

Tatian described the highly wrought allegorical interpretations of the Myths, as so many symbols of a foolish speculation of natural philosophy, and the gods themselves, symbols of the elements and operations of nature. When he was led to examine the Old Testament, he received salutary impressions, and says of it, "These writings found acceptance with me because of the simplicity of the language, the unstudiedness of the writer, the intelligible history of the creation, because of the prediction of the future, because of the wholesomeness of their precepts, and because of the doctrine of the one God which prevailed throughout them." Having thus come to the conclusion that Polytheism was untenable, and none other than a monotheistic religion could be true, he was prepared in some degree for the gospel.

In connection with his apology, he wrote an "Address to the Heathen," in which he defended the barbaric philosophy, φιλοσοφία των βαρβαρῶν, against the contempt of the Greeks, who, as he says, received all their knowledge and arts from barbarians themselves; but his apology is all of his writings that has reached our day.

- He brought from Syria the foundation of his speculations, and an ascetic disposition which never left him; and it was now strengthened and confirmed by the adoption of the Egyptian and Cabbalistic philosophy. One of his principal errors consisted in his Gnostic view of the imperfection of matter as a cause of evil; and the consequent merit of rising above all appetites and passions by an ascetic life. These views led him to the impression that there was a superior merit in a life of celibacy; and he wrote a treatise upon *Christian Perfection*, in which he sets forth Christ as the ideal standard of a strict ascetic life. In this work he largely insists upon a single and abstinent life, and in proof of his positions he quotes largely from apocryphal gospels, from which he drew a picture of Christ after the most perfect Gnostic model. By the most illogical mode of interpretation, he claims authority from 1 Cor. vii, 5, to place marriage and incontinency in the same condemnation; and affirms that they are both in the service of the devil. He was not only guilty of such perversions of the sacred text, but Eusebius says, that he was charged with having made numerous changes in the original text itself. Later

writers, however, seem to shield him from the imputation of having done so with a view to strengthen his doctrinal or ethical views; and suppose that the changes which he made were either those of Hebraisms, to purer Greek, or that he possessed different readings of the text itself. There was a remarkable tendency in the spirit of some church teachers of this age, to overlook the true character of the Christian religion, which designs to penetrate and ennoble all the relations of human life; and set up as meritorious before God and man, various fasts and abstinences, ascribing a peculiar sanctity and merit to an ascetic life; and especially to a state of celibacy. Nor was the notion of a meritorious efficacy all that prompted to its adoption; the reverence and respect of an ignorant community, and the hope of obtaining a subsistence, without personal labor and honest occupation, led many to its adoption.

This gave rise to convents and monkery. Women now began to form themselves into associations, and orders of religious females devoted to celibacy, who professed to be sanctified to God alone, and therefore made their claims upon the charitable and humane for support. The erroneous notions of a priesthood, and distinct classes and orders of ministers, whose sanctity and abstemiousness commanded deference to their *priestly* character, and efficacy to the *opus operatum* of their *ceremonies*, led to the adoption of celibacy among the clergy. The council of Elvira, in the third century, when this spirit had gained a com-

plete ascendancy, enacted, that those bishops, priests and deacons, who were living in the marriage state should be deprived of their places ; and that virgins, who had left their order, and would not return to it again, should not be allowed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, even in the hour of death.\*

Many of the Gnostic teachers, inculcated the doctrine of asceticism from the very nature of their systems, and their modes of worship required its adoption, in order to preserve their consistency. They held, that the world was the work of an inferior spirit, of an ungodly nature, and that man was destined to a higher life, when he should possess a higher nature : That this nature might be obtained, by combatting his evils or cultivating a licentious contempt of his passions, by throwing off all law and moral obligation. They would not allow man to be capable of revelations from the divinity, but, regarding him as imprisoned in this world, many considered that every thing *outward* had no connection with the inner man, or was entirely indifferent to it ; and hence, either held their passions in contempt, or made a virtue out of their restraints. This accounts for the vile practices in which many indulged, on the one hand, or the rigid abstinence and self-mortification practiced on the other.

A disposition to outdo the piety of philosophers, and thereby give greater credit to Christianity in the development of its practical tendency, in some

\* Clement. Strom. iii, 456, C. Iren. i, 28.

instances, led to this ascetic habit, especially among some Christian teachers, but with Tatian, it had, no doubt, its origin in his notions of the cause of evil, and the power of matter, which it became necessary to combat, in order to its purification.

In reference to the doctrine of *Æons*, according to Irenæus, the notions of Tatian, were something like those of Valentinus. His system, called "The heresy of the Encratitæ,\* taught that God sent forth by an act of his own will, the *Logos*, through whom the universe was brought into existence, the essence of which had eternally existed. He says, "The *Logos* through the will of God sprang from his simple nature," and it taught, that the first emanation was the *Logos*, which is the first medium through which all things flow to God, and which proceeds from the divine nature, without being separated from it. The mind of man, he conceived, to be produced from an essential emanation from the divine *Logos*. He drew a distinction between the rational mind, and the animal soul, and supposed the world to be inhabited by subordinate spirits, which were diffused through every part of the visible world; with many other opinions equally absurd.

As these were in imitation of the Egyptian and Cabbalistic philosophy, it shows Tatian's preferences, and the force of education; and although Christianity had been taught him by Justin, yet the Platonic

\* Theodoret. *Hær. Fabr.* l. i. c. 10.

notions of his master, opened a door for greater license, which he indulged in the most extravagant manner after he was gone.

But the monastic austerities found their opponents ; and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, a writer of some celebrity, in the second century, is found among the number. He wrote to Pinytus, a bishop in Crete, urging him not to impose such heavy and needless burdens upon Christians, especially as to the necessity of preserving their virginity. This gained Pinytus over ; and he wrote a reply, in which he extols Dionysius, and admits the necessity of feeding the flock with stronger meat, lest the people should remain in a state of infancy. Dionysius wrote several epistles to the churches, which, although they have not reached our day, demonstrate that he had the life and spirit of the gospel at heart, and sought to confirm the churches in peace and unity, and expel heresy from their midst. He wrote to the Lacedæmonians on doctrinal subjects ; to the Athenians, in relation to their declension after the martyrdom of Publius, and their revival under the care of Quadratus. He wrote to Crete, guarding the Christians against certain heretical opinions, and in his letter to the churches of Pontus, he defends the Lapsi, or fallen brethren, and urges that those who were penitent, should be received again into the bosom of the church.

He also wrote a letter to Soter, bishop of Rome, which is characterized by its pathos, and the love shown forth in it towards unfortunate and distressed mem-

bers of the church. Churches were often found in a suffering condition, and persecutions had banished many to the mines, where their hardships were great in the extreme; and the church at Rome was opulent, so that he feelingly exhorts her bishop, not to neglect the cause of suffering humanity, but to urge his flock to minister of their abundance to the suffering members scattered over the world.

The apologist, Athenagoras, is but little known as it regards his personal history; it is said that he was a catechist, of the Alexandrian school, before Clement,\* and with the apology he wrote to the emperor, M. Aurelius, and his son Commodus, we have a writing of his in defence of the resurrection of Christ, which is, however, of but little note.

The church in Asia Minor, was beset by Gnostic teachers and heathen scoffers, who were generally of high intellectual attainments, and a particular change in the theology of the church, gave rise to an anti-Gnostic party, who had to contend with the speculative caprice, and unbounded license of the Gnostic sects, and the schools, which had made rapid strides upon the church in these parts. Autolycus, who was a heathen, took advantage of this condition of things, and heaped upon the church at Antioch, reproaches, in a strain of ingenious arguments, with the exhibition of great learning. Theophilus, who was the bishop of this great metropolis, and a man of remarkable

\* Philip of Sida, the last of the presidents of the Alexandrian school, Dissert. in Irenæum, published by Dodwell, but not worthy of reliance.

powers, and great acquirements, addressed to him an apology in three books, refuting his positions and ably defending the Christian religion. Theophilus was a convert from heathenism, who was educated in all the learning of his day. His greatest obstacle appears to have been, a belief in the resurrection, a doctrine which contradicted his philosophy ; but it was successfully explained, and he became fully grounded in the belief of its truth. He wrote against the Gnostic sects, with great spirit, and defended the practical Christian spirit, which now began to oppose itself to all the forms of heresy and opposition. There is no doubt, but this adherence to the truth was the result of St. John's labors in the Asiatic churches ; his teachings being fresh upon the memory, tended greatly to counterbalance the influence of the Gnostic schools, and inspire this worthy bishop to contend for the faith ; and the influence of traditionary documents, would be greatly prevented by a strong attachment to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and the preservation of the genuine writings of inspired men.

This class of teachers sought to confirm their views, and oppose them to the Gnostic speculations, by a reference to the churches of apostolic origin, and great care was taken to collect the views of these churches, and show their concordance, as authority for the doctrines which were held. With this view, Hegesippus, a Jew of Asia Minor, travelled to collect the usages of the Jewish and heathen churches, and



to persuade himself of the harmony of Christian doctrines, in the different churches throughout the world. He has given us the result of these researches in a work called "Five Books of Ecclesiastical Events;" but he was an opponent of the Paulian party, and so strongly favored the Ebonitish views\* that his doctrinal opinions are not altogether sound. The same course was pursued by Melito, bishop of Sardis, who travelled through the east, in order to obtain information in ecclesiastical affairs, and he has left behind a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament, with an Apology addressed to M. Aurelius, about the year 177. Melito, however, was an extensive writer in his day, although many of his works are only known to us by name.

The contemporary of Melito, was the bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, Claudius Apollianaries; who wrote several works which are only known to us by name. There is a fragment of one of his works which is preserved by Eusebius against Montanism, but his writings in general, show that he was occupied upon the same subjects which engrossed the attention of Melito, and other church teachers of Asia Minor.

These were times of peculiar interest, for, beside the various Gnostic sects, the great variety of doctrinal opinions, and the opposition to the faith, from avowed adversaries, Montanism began to make great havoc among the churches. This drew forth the ability and zeal of the teachers on both sides, and an interesting

\* Euseb, b. ii. 23.

view of talents and piety could be developed, had we the documents which were extant in the latter half of the second century ; enough, however, is left us to know that there were men always raised up of suitable abilities, to defend Christianity in the time of its greatest need.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES.

Existence of God—Opinions upon His Nature—Tertullian's Realism—*Logos* and the Idealistic View—Merciful and Saving Affection of God—Origen and Tertullian upon God's Wrath—Alexandrian Teachers upon the same Subject—Divine Love and Retributive Justice—Creation out of Nothing—Hermogenes and his Views—Assailed by Tertullian—Origen's System peculiar to Himself—Bishop Methodius and Origen—The Trinity—Philo's views—Speculations among Heathen Writers—Parties Defined—Course of the Fathers—The Patripassians—Praxeas—The Difference among his Followers—Noëtus—His Plea before the Synod—The Founders of his System—Arius—The Synod on his Account—His Views—Origen Refutes him—Eusebius' Party—Their Bishop Artemon—Their Opinions—Paul of Samosata—His Doctrines and Final Expulsion—Dionysius and Sebellus.

THERE existed among the fathers generally, a deep and abiding conviction, that the conscience of man, universally acknowledged the existence of God ; they differed among themselves, in their conception of his nature ; and that difference is attributable to the mode of thought, through which they were brought to their different conclusions. Deriving their conceptions of God's nature from a sensuous materialism, or from a heathen mode of contemplating nature, they could not comprehend the proper spirituality of the divine being, but looked upon *πρωμα*, as a gross and ethereal *body*, composed of earthly ma-

terials, and thus suffered their conceptions of God to take a sensuous form. The idea of God carried with it, to them, the most real existence, and whatever they felt or knew, of the presence of the Supreme Being, fostered their impressions of his sensuous existence, and impressed them with the thought, that all above the senses, became mere abstractions.

But such was the *realism* of many, that it led to that theological disposition, which reduced every thing to substantiality. This was the case with Tertullian, and such likewise was the turn of thought, with the Alexandrian teachers, especially Clement, and Origen; who deduced the Christian doctrines after a learned and scientific manner.

On the other hand, there was an entire abandonment of speculation, and imagination, among those who sought to find in Christianity a religious spirit, that arose to God through the heart. Such maintained a religious consciousness, that all images of divine things were faint expressions, of what the soul experiences in the inward life of faith. Such was the impression of Irenæus, for he says, "All which we predicate of God, we speak as if in a kind of comparison; they are only images which love makes for itself, and our sentiments and feelings throw into these images something more than actually lies in them." The great misfortune was, that one extreme in this instance, as on many other subjects, led to an other, and from the *realistic*, many were led to an *ideality*, which deprived the Great Supreme of those

attributes essential to a true Christianity. The religious realism of some, led to the notion of a *merciful* and *saving* affection of God, separate from all ideas of his holiness; and separated the attributes of God, by a singular inconsistency in their belief, in reference to the redemption of the soul. Separating the goodness of God from his righteousness, they mistook the true character of God's wrath, and the nature of sin. Marcion, the Gnostic teacher, upon these views, was opposed, by Tertullian, who very properly asks him, if "the forgiveness of sin does not presuppose the existence of sin, in the sight of God?"\* And he maintains, that a separation cannot take place between his goodness and his righteousness, for "The goodness of God," he says, "has created the world, and his righteousness duly arranged it," recognizing that attribute which apportions to all, that which is just.

But Origen, and the Alexandrian teachers, did not properly conceive of the "wrath of God" against sin; they philosophised too much, and not only endeavored to eradicate the carnal views which were held, but ran into the other extreme. Taking a middle path, between a carnal Anthropopathism, and the Gnostics, and between the Gnostics, and the rest of the fathers, they endeavored to present the justice of God under the notion of a divine love, which is exhibited in the education of intelligent creatures; thus, Origen says, in one of his sermons,† "When the

\* Adv. Marc. ii, 28. † Hom. 18.

scriptures speak of God absolutely, and not in his relation to man, they declare that he is not like a man, for there is no end of his greatness, and the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods, . . . . But when you hear of the wrath of God, do not imagine that wrath is a passion, to which God is subject. It is a condescension of language, in order to convert and amend the child, for we ourselves put on a look of severity and anger towards children, not from feeling the passion ourselves, but designedly. If we preserve our mildness of aspect, and testify our love of the child, without changing our look, as the real interest of the child would require us to do, we spoil it utterly. Thus God is represented to us as angry, in order to our conversion and improvement, while in fact he is not subject to anger ; but thou wilt undergo the wrath of God, by drawing down upon thyself by thy wickedness, sufferings hard to be borne when thou art punished by what is called the wrath of God." On the other hand, the rest of the fathers set aside the idea of justice, as totally inconsistent, with the nature of a perfect God, and opposed the God of justice, by the goodness of God, maintaining that there is no such thing as retributive justice in God at all.

About the end of the second century, the peculiar character of the speculations of the fathers, led to a development of the doctrine of a creation out of nothing. To this doctrine, the Gnostics opposed the saying, *ex nihilo nil fit*, "from nothing, nothing can

some." A religion which consisted in a deification of nature, and either made God the author of the form and fashion of a chaotic mass, or made the unconscious chaos moved into form, by a succession of causes and effects.

There lived at Carthage, an artist of great celebrity, by the name of Hermogenes, who opposed the Christian doctrine upon this subject, although he was distinguished from the Gnostics, in his speculations, as they were more Grecian than Oriental, and not, of course, quite so imaginative as the Gnostics were disposed to be. He only departed from the Christian faith in this one point, which departure, however, was very important to the whole Christian scheme. Hermogenes opposed the emanative scheme of the Gnostics, because he regarded it inconsistent with the nature of things, as he could not see how unholy beings could emanate from a pure and holy God. Upon the same mode of reasoning, he controverted the creation of the world out of nothing, because, if its source of being was the will of God only, the purity of God's character forbids the idea, that he could have produced that which was imperfect or evil. This theory led him to absurd notions upon the origin of evil, and obliged him to assume the position, that matter is itself the source of evil; that if organic matter was eternal in existence, it limited the creative power of God, and established the notion of two principles, the forming and fashioning, and the undeterminate and passive; the latter existing only



in connection with the organization which is given to it, by the power of the former. That all orders of spiritual existences, whether encompassed by clay, or freed from being corporeal, in the regions of space, were created by God, out of eternal vicious matter.

Tertullian boldly assails his brother African, on his doctrine of matter, and the origin of the world;\* as also his opinion in relation to the soul,† yet he allows that he was a Christian in the main, and an eloquent and ingenious man.

Both Tertullian and Irenæus held the simple doctrine of creation, as taught in the scriptures, without any attempt at speculation, concerning it; but Origen was distinguished for a system peculiar to himself although that system was founded upon the persuasion of the church, yet he went, in his speculations, far beyond the prevalent belief. He advocated a creation out of nothing, acknowledged the beginning of our world, but supposed himself at liberty to speculate upon the pre-existence of matter, before its present formation; and ran into a system, which opposed itself to any beginning of creation. He conceived that the upholding of the world, was a continuous creation, and thereby, that there was an absolute dependence of creatures, without any beginning in time. What he says of the creation of the divine image in the adopted, explains his views upon this

\* *Liber contra Hermogenem.*

† Tertullian wrote a tract upon this subject, *de Censu Animæ*, which has not reached our day.

subject. "Now, the image of glory is not produced once for all, and then ceases to be produced ; but as long as the light is efficient in creating the image itself, so long is the image of the glory of God, constantly created. If, therefore, thou hast the spirit of adoption, (sonship,) God constantly begets thee in that same sonship, in every act, and in every thought, and thus thou art for ever being born as a son of God in Jesus Christ."\*

Bishop Methodius, a man of much inferior abilities to Origen, controverted these opinions, so far as he understood them, and urged against Origen as many absurdities as his system contained. But, as he evidently mistook the nature of the opinions he attempted to controvert, there is but little interest in the controversy. Mosheim thinks, that Methodius was a man of an accurate and discriminating mind,† but he certainly, in this controversy with Origen, shows great deficiency, even in comprehending his adversary ; for he beats the air with arguments, which do not meet the question at issue between them. Origen insists upon a continuous creation, in his misconception of the sustaining power of God ; but Methodius urges against it, as implied in their creation, the necessity of self-existence.

The great doctrine of the trinity soon began to agitate the theological polemics of the church, and about the middle or early part of the second century, through the influence of Grecian philosophy,

\*Jerem. Hom. ix. § 4, ed. Huet. p. 106. † Eccl. Hist. Book I, cent. iii, p. 171.

numerous opinions sprang up upon this subject, and methods as numerous were attempted, to explain and bring it down to human conception.

Philo conceived rightly, from the writings of Moses, upon the doctrines of the trinity. He speaks clearly in many instances, although it must be admitted, that he is not always consistent; yet his expressions show how prevalent were the speculations of the times, in relation to this subject: he says that "the Logos is the character of God, the image of God, the house of the Father in which he dwells; that he is the divine word, and governor of all things,"\* with many such expressions.

No one can be conversant with the writings of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, without being sensibly impressed with their speculations upon this subject; and will see that they must have had recourse to the same sources of information as Philo. Indeed, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Greeks and Romans, in their oracles, as well as their writings, acknowledged that the Supreme Being had begot another being from all eternity, which they asserted was the creator of all things, and which they sometimes termed, the Son of God, sometimes the word, sometimes the mind, and sometimes the wisdom of God.

The Egyptians called their trinity, *hemphtha*, and represented it by a globe, a serpent, and a wing, so disposed as to form one hieroglyphical symbol; and among the descendants of Zoroaster was found the

\* Philo's Works, *passim*.

saying, "The Father finished all things, and delivered them to the second mind. It must be evident, at least, that ideas existed of a trinity, and however vague those were, they show that the doctrine, when held by the fathers, was not calculated to impress the inquirer that it contained any thing very remarkable. But there were those, whose speculations combatted the doctrine of the fathers upon this subject so strongly, that they present an important part of the controversies of these times, and those speculative notions current among philosophers, account for the diversity of their conceptions.

Founded, as this doctrine is, upon a purely practical basis, some of the fathers transplanted it to a region entirely foreign to it, and gave opportunity for its admixture with extraneous matter. In this, they took another step towards settling the doctrines of Christianity upon a speculative, instead of a practical basis. There were, however, some, upon the other hand, who curbed the free development of doctrine with a view of obtaining uniformity, and *prescribing*, according to certain *fixed* conceptions, a church theology—a party which time has proved, were the more dangerous.

It is remarkable that speculative ideas were already current, under different forms, among Jewish theologians, Oriental and Platonic theosophists and philosophers; and there already existed, among the former, two different views in the conception of this doctrine. One party believing in the notion of an hy-

postasis, or the divine Logos, as a spirit existing in an independent personality, although in the most intimate union with the Father or divine First Cause. The other party held, that the Logos was nothing more than the reason which was hidden in God, or revealed in the operations of nature, or which is manifested in human speech. This latter party conceived that this reason could not be separated from God, because any such separation would be inconsistent with a perfect monarchia; and they could not otherwise maintain the unity of God against polytheism. But they differed, as they happened to be influenced by the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ, (which was the more prevalent mode of conception,) or the peculiarities of monarchianism.

As we have said, one party was careful to maintain the unity of God, the Polytheistic notions around them obliged them to be exceedingly careful upon this subject; but they rejected the hypostasis and conceived a union so intimate that they excluded the idea of personality in the trinity altogether. They controverted the idea of an independent personality, yet they maintained the divinity of Jesus Christ. But the other controverted the trinity as well as the divinity of Christ, yet attributed to Christ a character the most godlike not to be divine. Their views were in accordance with the Ebionites, with the exception, that the latter attributed to the human nature of Christ the influence of divine power and wisdom

at a certain period in his humanity, while the former supposed this union coeval with his existence.

The Patripassians sought to dignify Christ, in claiming for him the character of the supreme God himself, revealed in human nature. They regarded God as hidden before such revelation in humanity, or before the creation; and the Son, or Logos, after the revelation identically the same, without any distinction in any sense, save in the sense of a God hidden and unknown, or a God revealed and known through creation and incarnation. This made them represent the sufferings of Christ as the sufferings of the Father from which they derived their name. But among them there were differences of opinion, as the spirit of their teachers directed.

At Rome, we find a teacher of this school by the name of Praxeas, who, after some success in spreading his peculiar views, went to Carthage, where he obtained more notoriety and a greater number of adherents. Here he came in contact with Tertullian, who, on account of the opposition of Praxeas to Montanism, wrote against him with some spirit. From Tertullian it would appear, that among the followers of Praxeas there existed a difference. One party believed that the Son of God was the revealed God of creation, the appearance of deity of the Old Testament, and in the human body. In his incarnation they represented that he made himself the Son, or Logos, by extending his agency, and

thus was the offspring of a self-creation.\* The other believed that there was no distinction in regard to the divine being, and applied the name Son of God altogether to his humanity.†

Praxeas was a *confessor*. He had, during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius maintained his professions of Christianity under severe tortures. This gave him an influence which he would not otherwise have obtained ; and, at Carthage particularly, enabled him to teach his peculiar views with considerable success. No doubt, the difference existing among his followers grew out of a want of capacity in many of them to enter into the subtleties of his system ; and, as a consequence, it has reached us under different representations.

It appears that Noëtus of Smyrna was another of this party, who, on account of his heresies in the former part of the third century, was excommunicated. When he was before the synod, answering the charges against him, his plea was, that the doctrines which he held were in an eminent degree calculated to dignify the character of Christ.‡ It seems, that two men, of whom we have no farther knowledge, Epigonius and Cleomenes, were the founders of the system which Noëtus propagated ; and for which he was excommunicated. But it is likely that, in some of its features, Noëtus had improved their views, for, according to his teachings, God was visible in revelation and invisible at his own good pleasure—that

\* Tertullian, c. 10—26. † Tertull. 27. ‡ Hippolyt. c. Noet. c. ii.

he was begotten and underived, and that there was no other person than God the Father.

The bishop of Bostra, in Arabia, Beryllus, was among those who would not admit of any distinction in the divine being, but there is great difficulty in defining clearly his views. It seems, however, that on account of his opinions a synod was held in 244. Here Origen was permitted to take part in the discussion. From this we infer that Beryllus held, that, before the appearance of Christ, there was no Son of God as a being personally different from the Father; that the existence of the Son of God was an ideal existence in the foreordaining council of God, or that the Logos existed as a dependant power of the Supreme Being.\* But Beryllus differed with the Patripassians in a belief that, contemporaneously with Christ's incarnation, an existence of an independently personal Son of God began, which was distinct from the Being of God. The council maintained against Beryllus, that Christ had a reasonable human soul, for he maintained that instead of such a soul, it was supplied by the special *οἰκονομία τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος*, out of which the God-allied personality of Christ was formed. Jerome says that Beryllus thanked Origen, by letter, for the wisdom he had imparted upon the occasion.†

In the latter part of the second century there sprang up in the Roman church, a party founded by Theodotus, a man who had been excommunicated

\* See Origen, t. 1, Joh. p. 42. † De. Vir. Ill. c. 60.



by Victor, the bishop of Rome ; but whose influence and opinions caused his party to extend rapidly in a state of separation from the predominant church. They elected Natalius as their bishop, on account of his being a confessor, and because he was held in great esteem. But he had departed from the spirit of his faith, and mourned over the loss of religious enjoyments, and now finding, among the party over which he was elected, so little of that enjoyment which he desired, he returned to the predominant church. This, in a great measure, broke up the party, and they would have here ended but for one Artemon.

This man, however, came forward and rallied the friends of Theodotus, and the party was now called Artemonites. They continued for a long time, for they are spoken of in the controversies which arose upon the divinity of Christ, both by Novatian at Rome, and in the conflicts with Paul of Samosata. They held that Christ was a mere man without having any particular connection with the Father, save the influences of the Holy Spirit. They were fond of the Aristotelian dialects and critical inquiries ; from which we see the effect in their creed. And it is worthy of remark, that the notions of men in these times upon the subject of the divinity of Christ, was formed very much in accordance with the schools of philosophy to which they were most devoted. The Neoplatonists formed speculative notions of the divinity of Christ, or the trinity, while the

Aristotelian dialecticians reduced the subject to human comprehension and denied the divinity of Christ; and there is no doubt but the Artemonites were very much influenced in their notions from their philosophical preferences. A large portion of this party was accused by Epiphanius and others, of forming a system of criticism which perverted the scriptures to suit their dogmatical views; and of rejecting St. John's Gospel and the Apocalypse. It was, no doubt, on this account that Hippolytus defended the genuineness of these two books. Epiphanius calls them the *Αλογoi*, *Alogi*, which is designed to point out their heretical opinions in denying the genuineness of the gospel which contains an account of the *Logos*.

The Somosata doctrines, as they are sometimes termed, were anti-trinitarian, and in the hands of Paul of Somosata, who became bishop of Antioch about the middle of the third century, made a great impression upon the church. The party which embraced his opinions was called *Paulians*; but there was nothing that can be said of their views that originated with Paul himself. He did not deny that the scriptures *speak* of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but still, he taught that there was but *one* God. What he understood by the Holy Ghost, is difficult to define; and whether he understood, by the *Logos*, the word in God, or, the word proceeding from God, is also doubtful. But he certainly taught that the word or wisdom in God was not a person, but was in the

divine mind, as reason is in the mind of man. He also taught that Christ was a mere man, beginning to exist when born, but possessed of the wisdom of God, which gave him the character of Son of God ; but as he asserted that this wisdom deserted him when he suffered, he made Christ superior to man only in the superior gift with which he was endowed.

In order to erase all impressions of the divinity of Jesus Christ from the church at Antioch, Paul forbid the use of those hymns and spiritual songs, asserting his proper divinity, which had been in use, and confined that part of the church service to the use of the Psalms of David. This man is accused of many innovations, among which, not the least, is the connection of civil office with the ecclesiastical ; and he permitted the customs in use at the schools of rhetoricians and theatres, of giving public evidences of approbation by the noisy acclamations and clapping of hands, to approve his teaching and sermons, during divine service.

Many were the efforts made to convict Paul of erroneous doctrines before synods without success, until the year 265, when a presbyter by the name of Malchion, who was also by profession a rhetorician, forced from him a declaration of his opinions before a synod, and he was deposed from office.

These same opinions led to an angry controversy between Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, and their author ; but, unfortunately for the latter, in his pastoral letter against Sebellius, (an author of opinions of some

otoriety, who lived at Ptolmais in Pentapolis,) and Paul of Somosata, he used hard expressions and singular comparisons, which drew forth from the bishop of Rome, Dionysius, a reply. It seem that Sabellius used the Apocryphal Gospels, and contended that there was a supreme unity in God, and that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were only three forms in which that unity is revealed; he denied to the Redeemer an eternally enduring personality, as his own words evidently show, when he says,\* "Just as the Logos was begotten for our sake, so also, does he return back again after us, to that which he was before, so that he may be what he was before, after we have attained to the union with God, to which we are destined." He compares his doctrine to the sun, whose enlightening and warming substances were emblems of the Logos and Holy Spirit.† In this controversy, the council at Antioch considered the subject, and condemned the expression *homoousios*, *Homousion*, employed against the followers of Paul—an incident which laid the foundation for the controversy which prang up in the fourth century. But the bishop of Alexandria was not tenacious about a subject which he conceived was incomprehensible, so that the true and important features of his doctrine were admitted; as the bishop of Rome designed to contradict those who placed the Son of God in the grade of a creature, assigning to him a beginning of existence in time. But still, Dionysius of Alexandria, must not be un-

\* Lib. cit. c. 12. † Epiphani. Hæres, 62.

derstood as departing from the peculiar views of the Alexandrian teachers, which were clearly developed at more recent periods.

**NOTE.**—On page 221, Noëtus is represented as believing that “God was begotten and underived.” Theodoret, who thus represented him, undoubtedly understood this in reference to the generation of the Logos, or Son ; and Noëtus intended that “begotten,” was one of the methods through which God was visible ; especially, as he maintained the unity of God, without any trinity.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IRENÆUS.

**His Birth and Parentage—His Teachers—Church at Lyons and Vienna—The Offspring of Smyrna—Establishment of a Churchly Theology—His Work against the Gnostics—The Controversy with Gnostics and Montanists—Irenæus as a Writer—Montanism in Lyons and Vienna—Visit to Rome—Its Object—Millenarianism—Irenæus and Others upon that Subject—Mileto's Views—Origen's Opposition—Dionysius of Alexandria opposes Irenæus—Rome—Letter to Victor—Confutation of the Gnostics—Letter to Florinus—His Learning, Industry, and Doctrines—His pupil Hippolytus.**

THE most prevalent opinion in relation to the birth-place and parentage of Irenæus is, that he was a Greek, born of Christian parents, in or near Smyrna, in Asia Minor: but there is no certain knowledge in relation to either, as accounts of his origin are inferred either from his own or other productions. His doctrines and spirit prove that he came from the schools of Asia Minor, and we gather that his first instructor was Papias, bishop of Hieropolis; a man who seems to have been of unquestionable piety, but of little abilities, so that he did not continue long as his pupil. We find him next with Polycarp in Smyrna; and as both Papias and Polycarp were pupils of St. John, he may be supposed to have received his instruction from the best authorities of his time.

The churches of Lyons and Vienna seem to have been the offspring of the church at Smyrna; although French historians claim to have derived their Christianity from Rome. Gregory Tours states that seven missionaries went from Rome at a very early period and founded seven churches. One of these missionaries was said to be Dionysius, of Paris, who introduced Christianity in that city. But without relying upon the uncertain testimony of Gregory, who wrote towards the close of the sixth century, when the most fabulous accounts of the origin of churches were circulated, we have a document much older, which gives an account of Saturninus, who founded the church at Toulouse; where he suffered a most cruel and shameful death. Lyons and Vienna were in constant communication with the church at Smyrna, and when they needed assistance they sent to that city, as in the case of Irenæus; for it seems that when Pothinus, the bishop of Lyons, required aid, Irenæus was sent, when he was either a deacon or presbyter at Smyrna, to co-operate with him. Here he distinguished himself as a faithful Christian minister, a writer, and finally as a martyr.

In the great struggle for the faith once delivered to the saints, against the Gnostic and other speculations of these troublous times, the more spiritual teachers of the church, who attempted to oppose these innovations, concerted the idea of establishing a defined creed, or theology, for the church. This was prominent among the teachers of Asia Minor, or

those ministers who came from that school of theologians. They were doubtless actuated by a truly Christian consciousness, but they opposed to these speculations, doctrines equally foreign from the true faith, and hence it had a very unhappy tendency. Irenæus was among this class of church teachers. He was of a practical Christian turn, after his venerable instructor; but in opposing Gnosticism with a churchly theology, he was not only aiding to establish a most dangerous precedent, but with the essential features of Christian doctrines, he held many things which he incorporated therewith, entirely foreign to the truth. This led him to appeal to churches as apostolical; and finally to Rome, as the *ecclesia apostolica* of greatest authority.

In his work against the Gnostics, he gives a universal creed, very much resembling the Apostles' Creed, and is one of the most ancient confessions of faith upon record. He insists, that to this all the true churches give witness by their united concurrence, while any unprejudiced person may deduce it from the scriptures: "Although scattered over the whole world," he says, "the church as carefully maintains this faith as if it inhabited only one house. It believes these things as if it had one soul, and the same heart, &c.; it preaches and teaches them as harmoniously as if it had only one mouth."

This effort to establish a theological basis for the whole church, gave rise to a spirit of controversy, to which it had heretofore been a stranger. Gnosticism



was an extravagant speculation, and it was opposed by an opposite extreme, in the form of a religious realism and extravagant feelings excited by Montanism. What contributed in a very great degree to the spread of Montanism was, that it offered an enthusiasm in the character of its doctrines, suited to the spirit of the age; and Irenæus, no doubt, was tinctured with its doctrines, as it opposed itself to Gnosticism. But he labored to moderate their views, and reconcile their doctrines, for the sake of maintaining unity among the churches.


Irenæus is distinguished in all the ecclesiastical events of his day—as a writer, he is considered dogmatical, but as a controversialist, he differed with many in his times, because he steadily kept in view the pleasing task of reconciling differences instead of widening the breach between contending parties; and thus harmonized the churches, instead of arraying them against each other.

The church at Lyons, during the persecutions of Marcus Aurelius, had many members from the churches of Asia Minor who were prominent in the Montanistic movements. In Asia Minor, congregations were first formed of these professing Christians, and a most violent controversy arose between them and the church at Rome and elsewhere. The church teachers classed the Montanistic prophets among the *Energumieni*, or such as were possessed by evil spirits. Synods were called, and many declared themselves Montanists, to the surprise of the whole church.

While this state of things lasted, the Montanists in the churches of Lyons and Vienna took a lively interest in the agitation of this subject, and wrote to Rome through their bishop, Eleutheros. Irenæus, as he was held in great esteem, and favored their views, was the bearer of their letters: he was at the same time deputed to represent them and their wishes. Some suppose that the object of these brethren, together with the mission of Irenæus, was to express a decided disapprobation of the Montanistic movements, and endeavor to correct the evil. But all the circumstances considered, would lead to the conclusion that the object of the church at Lyons, and their presbyter, Irenæus, must have been to urge the spirit of Christian moderation, endeavor to lower the importance of the controversy, and maintain Christian unity. This, too, is in keeping with the character of Irenæus, who was, no doubt, to a great degree, if not decidedly, Montanistic, as well as a great lover of unity. He foresaw that the Montanists would be under the necessity of propagating themselves as a schismatical party, and by cultivating Christian moderation on the one part, and lowering the importance of some peculiarities, on the other, that result might be avoided. But the effort was unsuccessful, and the Montanists became a separate church party, under the name of Cataphrygians.

As a Montanist, Irenæus was in favor of the doctrine of a millennial reign which the Messiah should establish upon the earth, towards the end of the world.

To the more serious and thinking, this doctrine was regarded as a season of rest to the church, after the violent persecutions to which it was subjected, and prophecy was examined in order to test the time, when heathenism, its opponent, should be conquered and the church find peace. Upon this point, the most prevalent opinion among the moderate, was, that the world was to endure six thousand years in its present condition, and that the seventh, or last thousand of the world's existence, was to be the rest and Sabbath of the church. But a carnal Judaism had engrafted sensuous images, foreign to the scriptural teachings upon this subject; and the Phrygian spirit which was exhibited in Montanus, was also developed in Papias, of the same country, who was bishop of Hieropolis, engrafted the most sensuous views upon this subject into Christianity. Papias may have been a man of piety, but his want of judgment and sound critical views, together with an easy credulity, caused him to collect oral traditions, and sayings of the lives of Christ and his apostles, which gave to his notions of the Millenium a fanciful and gross character. This was opposed by the teachings of the New Testament, and opened a field for the licentious to indulge, under the supposed authority of Christianity. Many of this class supposed the millenium very near at hand; but with Irenæus the millennial kingdom was only a state of preparation for the saints, who were to be placed in the enjoyment of a higher state of bliss, by a gradual preparation for the more perfected revelation of the divine glory.



His doctrine is, that after the resurrection, the saints of God will, in different degrees of nearness, in the holy city, in Paradise, or in heaven, enjoy the sight of the Lord; "for," he says, "every where shall the Saviour be seen, as they who see him shall be worthy." But he conceived this in the sense, that during the 1000 years, the Christians were to be prepared for their enjoyment of the presence of God by the "resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of antichrist, and the destruction of all nations who are under him, in which the Christians shall reign in the earth, growing by the sight of the Lord, and through Him, shall they be habituated to receive the glory of God the Father, and shall, in the kingdom, receive a conversation and communion and unity of spiritual things with the holy angels."\* Together, with the risen saints, he supposed that those who had resisted antichrist, would live and propagate a pure seed, without the curse which preceded the world's history; and hence made marriage as one of the joys of the millenium.

He supposed that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, for he says, that "the earth being restored and Jerusalem rebuilt," the Jews would also be restored, as a part of the Christian church; he says, "we have shown a little before, that the church is the seed of Abraham, and, therefore, that we may know that in the New Testament, after the Old, He shall, out of all nations, gather together those who shall be saved,

\* Irenæus, 5, 35, 1.

raising up from the stones children to Abraham." Justin Martyr was of the same opinion with Irenæus, as he regarded the millenium as a part of the faith, notwithstanding many opposed his views: this is clear, when he says, "I, and whosoever are, in all things of sound Christian doctrine, know, that there shall be both a resurrection of the flesh, and 1000 years in Jerusalem, built, and adorned, and enlarged, as the prophet Ezekiel and Isaiah, and the rest confess."\* Trypho asks Justin the question: "Do you confess that this place of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and your people gathered together and be in joy with Christ, together with the patriarchs and prophets, and those of our race, and even those who become proselytes before your Christ came?"†. To which he assented, and goes on in other parts of the dialogue to confirm the views which were held by the fathers of his day.

Seventy years after the decease of St. John, the bishop of Sardis, Mileto, is found among the more spiritual advocates of the doctrines of the Chiliasts. He says that, "in the divine promises, we look for nothing earthly or transitory, as the Militans hope; no marriage-union, according to the phrensy of Cerinthus, and Marcus; nothing pertaining to meat or drink, as Irenæus, Tertullian, and Lactanius, assenting to Papias, assert; nor do we hope for 1000 years after the resurrection, the reign of Christ will be on the earth, and that the saints will reign with Him amid delights, as Nepos taught, who feigned a first

\* Dialog. § 8    † Ibid.

resurrection of the righteous, and a second of the ungodly, and that, between these two, the nations that know not God will be kept in the flesh in the corners of the earth. Which, after the 1000 years of the reign of the righteous upon the earth, are to be excited by the instigation of the devil, to war against the righteous with a shower of fire, and thus dying, are, together with the rest, who before died in ungodliness, to be raised in an incorruptible body, to eternal punishments.”\*

No name has reached our day, of any writer who advocated an opposite opinion to the Millenarians, until the early part of the third century. Origen was the first who openly impugned the doctrine and charged its supporters with being “disciples of the letter alone,” “refusing the labor of understanding, and as following a certain surface of the letter of the law.”† Irenæus, it is true, blames some for “attempting to allegorize,” and no doubt the sensuous chiliasm of the church grew out of that mode; for its advocates were arrayed against the allegorizing mode, as the work of Nepos shows.‡ At any rate, Origen charges them with thinking in this way, for he says that they thought “strangers should be given to them as ministers of their delights, whom they were to have as ploughmen, or builders of the walls, by whom their destroyed cities should be built up,” with “looking for promises consisting in bodily pleasure and luxury,” and that “they, therefore, chiefly

\* De Dogm. Eccles. c. 52. † De Princ. ii, 11, 2. ‡ See Euseb. H. E. vii, 24.

long to have again, after the resurrection, such flesh as shall never fail in the power of eating and drinking, and doing all which belongs to flesh and blood ;”—and of, “even after the resurrection, marriage-union, and begetting of children.”

Dionysius of Alexandria opposed the views of Irenæus in a work which shows that he only followed in the steps of his great master Origen.

We find, however, an opposition to these views in Rome, as well as in many of the churches of an anti-Jewish origin, especially in the war which they waged against Montanism, but Irenæus regards this opposition in the light of Gnosticism, and combats it as a Gnostic speculation.\*

Animated by the love of church unity, when Victor, in the celebrated Easter controversy, renounced communion with the churches of Asia Minor,† on account of the difference of opinion which existed between them, Irenæus wrote him a letter, in the name of the churches of Lyons and Vienna, in which he says, “We live together in peace, without regarding these differences ; and the difference in our regulation about the facts, makes our agreement in faith shine forth more clearly.” When this difference was first revived, in A. D. 171, which formed the second great controversy, there was no rupture on account of it ; all parties found a brotherly reception in Rome, and were admitted to the communion up to the time of Victor : from this circumstance Irenæus

\* Iren. V. 32. † See page 122.

represents, in his letter, the bishops before Victor as models of toleration, and he says, "The apostles command us to judge no man in respect to meats or drink, or fasts, new moons, or Sabbaths. Whence, then, come controversies? Whence divisions? We celebrate feasts, but in the leaven of wickedness and evil, because we divide the church of God, and observe outward matters, while we leave the weightier matters of love and faith untouched. We have, nevertheless, learned from the prophets that such fasts and such feasts are displeasing to the Lord."

The chief work of Irenæus which has descended to us, is his *confutation of the Gnostic systems*; this is preserved in a literal Latin translation with fragments of the original Greek. Many of his works are lost, and their existence would never have been known to us, but for his own mention of them. With the letter he wrote to Victor, bishop of Rome, there is another addressed to a presbyter of Rome, Florinus, with whom Irenæus was intimate in his youth, while they both lived with the venerable Polycarp. This letter was written in consequence of some peculiarity of opinion which Florinus had embraced, respecting the creation of evil. It is difficult to judge from the title of the work with any degree of accuracy, in what the opinions of Florinus consisted. Eusebius quotes the title,\* which indicates that the work was in two parts; the first of which means that Florinus had

\* It reads thus: *πρὸς μοναρχίας ἢ πρὸς τοῦ μόνου τοῦ Θεοῦ ποικίλη κακία*.



denied the doctrine of the *μοναρχία*, or unity of God ; or an essay to show that God is not the author of evil ; and the second implies that he attempted to show that the *creator of evil is not God*. There is no doubt, that while Florinus acknowledged the untenableness of a theory, which placed the cause of evil in God, he fell into an opposite extreme, and supposed a self-existent principle of evil out of God. It was this which Irenæus opposed when he addressed him thus : "These doctrines, the *elders* who preceded *us*, and who was in the habit of intercourse with the apostles, have not delivered to you."

Irenæus was learned and industrious, and employed his talents to refute the Gnostic heresies which had sprung up thus early, from the union of the dogmas of the Oriental, Egyptian and Platonic philosophy. But it is evident that he was less acquainted with the Oriental than the Greek philosophy, and did not, therefore, properly understand the heresies which he attempted to refute ; at least in their true origin. His representation of Christian doctrine is strongly tinged with Platonism, and he has borrowed the very ideas and language of the Alexandrian Platonists. He calls the Son the minister and instrument of the Father in creation, and says, that "God had no need of the ministry of angels in forming the world, when he had his Son and his image ministering to him." But he advanced this in order to refute the Gnostic notion of the *Demiurgus*, or that the Creator of the world was a divine emanation far inferior to

the Logos. He attributes a corporeal form to angels, and the human soul ; and the duration of the latter he ascribes not to its nature, but to the will of God. He conceived man to be possessed of three parts, body, soul and spirit;\* and throughout his writings, his moral doctrines are by no means free from superstition.

The only individual known to us, as a pupil of Irenæus, is Hippolytus ; and this has been greatly questioned by many able writers. But there is great resemblance in their views, and many circumstances lead to the conclusion that Irenæus had considerable connection with him. It is certain, that Hippolytus had a very prominent place among the writers of these times, and great interest has been created, in more recent days, to learn the particulars of his life and writings. He was a bishop, but of what place is uncertain ; some writers place him at Rome, others make him a Metropolitan of Arabia ; † but it is certain that he is found sometimes in the east and at others in the west.

In A. D. 1551, there was dug up at Rome, a marble statue of Hippolytus, dedicated to his memory, with some account of his works. He is here represented in his episcopal character, sitting upon his *episcopatus*, or episcopal seat ; and, underneath him, is the sixteen year cycle of Easter which he prepared. He wrote extensively in Chronology, and is the author of various exegetical, doctrinal, and polemico-doctrinal works.

\* Irenæ. *Hæres.* liii. c. 8, n. 3. † Euscb. vi c. 20.

As an exegetical writer he is supposed to precede Origen; and Jerome thinks that he is an accomplished interpreter of scripture. He wrote a commentary on the bible, which is quoted by Jerome. He also wrote a work in which he attempted to refute thirty-two heresies; a small work on antichrist; and a commentary on the book of Daniel, in which he places the end of the world at 500 years after the birth of Christ.

Hippolytus, like Irenæus, was a Montanist, and defended the doctrines of this sect with great zeal. In the commencement of the third century he is found among the controversialists respecting the festivals of the church;\* but the little we know of him is gathered from others, as most of his works have not reached our day.

\* Cf. Hieronymi Ep. 72. ad Vital.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PERSECUTIONS IN LYONS, & c.

**Fanatical Rage of the People—Effort of Epagathus to Defend the Church—Efforts to make Slaves Slander—The Selection of Four Persons for Especial Persecution—Each Case Considered—Martyrdom of Pothinus—Symphronius—The Heroic Conduct of his Pious Mother—The Favorable Change—Christian Soldiers Pray for Rain—Legio Fulminea—Prosperity of the Church—Restraints of Commodus—Effect of his Death—Severus Surrounds Lyons—Orders all Christians to Death—Death of Irenæus—After temporary Cessation, Persecution Increases—Emperor's Edict—The Purchase of Privileges Discountenanced by the Church.**

IN 177, Lyons and Vienna, and the neighboring towns, became the scenes of most cruel and relentless persecutions. The fanatical rage of the people was beyond all control. Christians were reviled, ill treated, and plundered; the legatus, and officers of the government shared in the persecuting spirit, and greatly contributed to its violence. False reports were currently circulated of Christians in their private assemblies; and hundreds were cast into prison as common felons. Under these circumstances, although it was dangerous to interfere, yet a young man of rank and influence, whose name was Vettius Epagathus, knowing the injustice done to Christians by

such reports, asked the privilege to prove them false, and expose the fallacy of such opposition. He was asked if he was a Christian—to which he unhesitatingly replied that he was—when, instead of hearing his defence, he was ordered to prison.

The account given by the church of this bloody persecution, shows the remarkable firmness and peace of the sufferers under the most trying circumstances. It says, "they were bedewed and strengthened by the waters of life, which flowed forth from the heart of Christ, and that nothing is terrible where the love of God existed, nor painful where the glory of Christ dwells." The governor ordered all Christians to be sought out, and the slaves of such as were known were arrested and put to the torture, in order to discover the retreat of their masters, or be made to confirm the evil reports of the proceedings of Christians in their assemblies. To gratify the soldiers, and fearing the torments to which they were subjected, they accused them of eating human flesh, with other unnatural crimes, which incensed the people even to madness against the church; and the most diabolical inventions were employed to torture the worshippers of the true God. In this state of unheard of rage, four persons were selected as special victims on whom to spend the fury of "the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers." Sanctus, who was a deacon of Vienna, was the first who, amidst the tortures, indignities, and barbarities of these minions of the devil, sustained a calmness and silence of the

most extraordinary character. They could not extort from him who he was, what was his name, or whether he was free or a slave; to every interrogation he replied, "I am a Christian." Not satisfied with the usual modes of torture, they procured brazen plates, which they made red hot and applied to the tender parts of his body. Maturus was a recent convert, but strong in faith, even to martyrdom.

Attalus had been "a pillar and supporter of the church," and when in the amphitheatre, he was led about with the inscription in Latin carried before him, "This is Attalus the Christian," and nothing saved him from immediate death but the discovery that he was a Roman citizen; but orders soon came from the emperor, and he was executed. In company with Attalus, a physician, by the name of Alexander, was executed. This man was so deeply moved during the examination of the Christians, and evinced such an interest in the affairs of the sufferers, that the governor asked him who he was, to which he boldly replied, "I am a Christian." He was then put to severe torture in the amphitheatre, and with the rest went to receive a martyr's crown. During the torture of Attalus he was seated upon an iron chair heated to redness, and being terribly scorched, when the smell issued from him, he said to the multitude, "This indeed which ye do, is to devour men; but *we* devour not our fellow men, nor practice any other wickedness." But the most remarkable case of the four was Blandina; she was a female slave

whose mistress was afterwards put to death—but who now stood by, fearing that her servant would not witness a good confession, for she was a very delicate female. During the trial, such was her firmness and apparent peace, that her torturers were amazed. While she was enduring a succession of the most shameful torments, to all questions, her only reply was, “I am a Christian, and no wickedness is practiced among us.” She was suspended to a stake, in the amphitheatre, while two others were being tortured, and such was the power of her prayers, that her fellow sufferers were greatly encouraged. When she was brought forth again, it was in company with a youth, whom she encouraged during his tortures ; but who expired in the hands of his tormentors. She was placed in the iron chair, enclosed in a net to be tossed by a raging bull, and finally pierced through with a sword.

The aged bishop of Lyons, Pothinus, was dragged before the tribunal, where the legate asked him, “Who is the God of the Christians?” to which he replied, “You shall know him if you prove yourself worthy of such knowledge.” He was cast into prison, with crowds who shared a similar fate, and such were his sufferings from the brutal treatment he received, that his age and infirmities could not endure them, and he died two or three days after his arrest. While an idolatrous crowd were bowing to the image of Cybele, in a neighboring town, a Christian by the name of Symphronius refused to join in their wor-

ship. He was seized and conducted before Heraclius, the governor, who said to him, "You are a Christian, I suppose." He answered, "I am a Christian : I pray to the true God who rules in heaven ; but I cannot pray to idols ; nay, if I were permitted, I would dash them to atoms, upon my own responsibility." Efforts were made to save him, but neither threats nor promises could induce him to renounce his faith ; and he was finally sentenced to be beheaded. On his way to the place of execution, a scene ensued of some interest : his mother was a woman of great piety, and she followed close by, as he moved to the place of execution, exhorting him to firmness and faith : "My son, my son," she cried, "keep the living God in thy heart ; we cannot fear death, which leads so certainly to life : up, my son ! let thy heart be up ! and look to him who rules on high. Thy life is not taken from thee to-day, but thou art conducted to a better. By a blessed change, my son, thou wilt pass this day to the life of heaven."

But a favorable change soon took place in the conduct of the emperor. In the war of 174 against the Marcomanni, and the Quaddi, the army was reduced to great peril and distress by a serious drought. Their distress was increased by the position of the army, as it had to face the burning sun, without shade or shelter. All hope of success failed, and their destruction seemed inevitable ; but there were many Christians in the army, who, at this critical moment, fell upon their knees, and asked God for rain. While



they were yet in the attitude of prayer, the heavens became clouded, and the rain soon fell, to the great gratification and relief of their fellow soldiers. The storm which ensued frightened their enemies, and Marcus Aurelius gained the victory. Tertullian, in speaking of this occurrence, says: "Marcus Aurelius also, in the German expedition, received rain after a drought, at the prayers of the Roman Christian soldiery. How often have the drought of countries been removed by our kneeling and fasting." In commemoration of this event, Marcus Aurelius gave the legion, which was composed mostly of Christians, the name of *Legio Fulminea*. He caused the persecution to cease, and issued an edict inflicting heavy penalties upon all who disturbed Christians in their persons or privileges on account of their religion.

Prosperity attended the church, and from Lyons and Vienna it spread into Germany.\* Irenæus himself gives us this account, referring, no doubt, to that part of Germany subject to the Romans, and easily reached from its connection with Gaul; but he leads us to suppose, from his language, that it had even reached the neighboring independent tribes; when he says, "Many nations of barbarians, without paper or ink, have, through the Holy Spirit, the word of salvation written in their hearts."† The times were remarkable for the peace granted to the church through the world,‡ and through some singular interposition of divine Providence, Commodus, who was

\* Iren. *Hæres.* l. i. ch. 10.    † Ib. iii. c. 4.    ‡ Euseb. B. V. c. 19.

himself a most base and vicious profligate, did not persecute the church. He was more mild than his father, and through the influence of Marcia, the favorite concubine of the emperor, Christians had peace for nearly twelve years, after eighteen of the most serious and bloody persecution.

The political broils which followed the murder of Commodus, soon changed this favorable state of things, and gave to mobs and governors the opportunity of unrestrained vengeance upon Christians. Although they had a temporary repose under that sovereign, partly through the influence of Marcia, with whom he lived in illicit intercourse, and partly through his own indifference, yet the law of Trajan was not repealed, and, although there was no legal effort to seek after Christians, in order to bring them to punishment, yet, when they were informed upon, they were immediately put to death. Appolionius, a Roman senator, was accused, before the *Perfæctus urbis*, of being a Christian, by one of his slaves. He avowed his faith with great firmness, and on that account was sentenced by the senate to be put to death; but the slave was also put to death for informing upon his master.

As soon as the emperor, Severus, was seated upon the throne, he surrounded Lyons with an army, and ordered all Christians to be put to the sword, without distinction of age or sex. The execution of this order was obeyed with great carnage; the streets of Lyons were drenched with the blood of Christians,

and Irenæus, their bishop, fell a martyr, with many of his flock ; being now more than one hundred years of age, A. D. 202.\* Tertullian represents that this emperor was favorable to the Christians, from having been cured by a Christian slave, when he was suffering from a very severe illness. The slave's name was Proculus, whom, it is said, the emperor always kept near him. But Christians were still exposed to persecutions of every sort, and if the emperor protected those who were in the higher walks of life from the rage of the populace, the old laws still subjected them to danger and to death.

There were two remarkable circumstances which at this time gave rise to increased persecution. The emperor, from a desire to prevent the farther spread of Christianity, published an edict, A. D. 202, in which conversion to either Christianity or Judaism, was punished with severe penalties. This encouraged the unfavorable state of feeling towards Christians, and gave great license to the persecuting spirit. The season for festivals, too, in honor of the emperor, was at hand, and Christians became the more conspicuous on account of their refusing to participate in the customary heathen rites ; this enraged the people the more, and no effort, even of the civil rulers, could restrain them. So great was the severity of the persecutions now, that Christians were impressed with the belief that it foretold the speedy approach of anti-christ.

\* Irenæus succeeded the venerable Pothinus, as bishop of Lyons—see page 244.

In some districts, the privilege of pursuing their worship, unmolested, was purchased by the churches, but this was greatly opposed, by the more devoted and prominent Christians, on the ground, that it was derogatory to the character of Christianity, and served only to excite the cupidity of avaricious minions of the government, and was soon abolished.



## CHAPTER XIX:

### TERTULLIAN OF CARTHAGE.

**His Birth Place and Parentage—His Education and Acquirements—A Presbyter at Rome—His Style and Language—His Opposition to Gnosticism—Tertullian a Montanist—Montanus—His Views—Montanistic Doctrines—Views of the Church—How to Attribute Tertullian's Montanism—His Apology—His Real Position—The Occasion of his Apology—The Persecution of these Times—The Five Carthaginian Martyrs—Perpetua and Felicitas—The Spirit and Boldness of the Apology—Its Subject and Beauty.**

THE peculiar theology of the North African church, has its origin in Tertullian, although its influence and full development is attributed to the powerful talents of Augustine, through whom it swayed the whole western church. Tertullian is, therefore, an important character among the fathers, as the representative of the North African theology, which grew up in the latter part of the second, and the beginning of the third century.

He was born at Carthage, the metropolis of Africa, A. D. 150; his father was the son of a proconsular centurion, who was in constant attendance upon the proconsul of Africa, and he reared his son in the habits and faith of idolatry. Tertullian was, however,

educated in the best possible manner, and his studies included all the literature of the times. Jerome calls him the first Latin writer ; but he understood the Greek, and composed three treatises in that language, but they have not reached our day, only in broken fragments, and unconnected parts. The quotations with which his writings abound, show that he was extensively acquainted with poetry, natural philosophy, and medical science ; and, as he was bred to the law,\* he uses, with great familiarity, the terms and phrases peculiar to his profession.

Before his conversion, he was a thorough heathen, and indulged in all the vices of his day. We have no account of the particulars of his conversion, but in A. D. 196, we find him a presbyter at Rome, where his activity as a theologian soon brought him into extensive notice. The number and character of his works show that he was a most zealous defender of the opinions which he entertained.

His lively imagination and zeal against the Gnostic doctrine of *Æons*, which he ascribed to the Platonic doctrine of immaterial forms, seduced him ; so that he unfortunately banished all pure intelligence from his system, and maintained that all intelligent beings, including even God himself, *was material*. "Who can deny," says he, "that God, though a spirit, is a body ? for spirit is body of a particular kind." He holds the opinion that there was a time when Christ did not exist, and advances some absurd opinions with respect to marriage, war, and the power of magistrates.

\* Euseb. H. E. ii, 2.



It was this anti-Gnostic religious realism, which led Tertullian to adopt the opinions of Montanus. This man was a convert to Christianity in a village of Mysia, called Ardaban, on the confines of Phrygia. He was of a people in whose religion we recognize the wild enthusiasm which distinguished this sect. Inclined to fanaticism and superstition, believing in enchantments and magic, it is quite natural to transfer this Phrygian spirit, which showed itself in the ecstasies of the priests of Cybele, to the ecstasies and somnambulism of the Montanists. But what had been brought forward by Montanus is in broken fragments, in the language of feeling, and not of reason; was conceived by Tertullian, more clearly, and placed into a more rational system.

Montanus used to fall into unconscious transports, during which, he conceived that he became the passive instrument of a higher power, to deliver predictions, which were interpreted, from enigmatical and mystical expressions. He believed in a strict ascetic life, and exhorted Christians boldly to confess their faith, that they might seek martyrdom. During his transports he predicted new persecutions, and the near approach of that punishment which God had threatened against the persecutors of his people. He believed in the second coming of Christ to establish upon earth the Millenarian kingdom, while he extolled the blessedness of that kingdom in the most extravagant and singular coloring.

Montanism taught the gradual development of the



kingdom of Christ: the patriarchal religion was the germ, the law and the prophets its infancy, the gospel its youth, and under a new outpouring of the spirit, through the teaching of Montanus, its manhood. It did not limit the operations of the Holy Ghost, either in man as a sanctifier and comforter, or in the kingdom progressively developing new revelations. Tertullian maintained\* that prophets were to be raised up who should advance and complete former revelations. He supposed, however, that there were unalterable foundations in the doctrines recognized by the church as fundamental, which made him oppose heretics; for he conceived that one of the evidences of the verity of their new prophets was, the unshaken belief in these fundamental features of Christian doctrine; and he sought a church unity that the decisions of new revelations might determine all controversies in reference to doctrines or church polity. Tertullian expressly says, in reference to these revelations settling all inquiry, "ye shall not thirst after any instruction; no inquiries shall torment you."

But while Montanism taught the divine authority of the existing order of bishops, as successors of the apostles, and the existing order of the church as founded upon divine direction, it looked for an order higher than these ordinary ones, a race of men inspired by the Holy Ghost, who were in a higher sense, alone, the real successors of apos-

\* Tertullian de Pudicit, c. 12.

ties ; to whom belonged the apostolic power of working miracles. And Tertullian, whose opinions for a third order, by divine right, have been so extensively used, himself sets the church of the spirit in opposition to the church of bishops,\* when he says, *Ecclesia spiritus per spiritalem hominem, non ecclesia numerus episcoporum*. He makes the inward gifts of the Holy Spirit the marks of the true church, when contrasted with an external catholicism: "The church," says he, in another place, "in the peculiar, and the most excellent sense, is the Holy Ghost, in which the three are one ; and, therefore, the whole union of those who agree in this belief, (viz. that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one,) is named **THE CHURCH** after its founder and sanctifier, (the Holy Ghost ;") and he contemplates the completion of the church by a more perfected revelation, through prophets or successors of apostles, to communicate infallible instruction beyond the revelations already made.

Jerome, in his account of Tertullian, attributes his attachment to these new opinions to the contumacious treatment of the Romish clergy ; they were no doubt jealous of his splendid talents, and great learning, but much of their opposition may have grown out of his peculiar bent of mind ; which is more probably the cause of his attachment to Montanism. Tertullian embraced these views about 199 ; and the greater part of his writings were composed after he became a Montanist. His apology, however, is an exception ; but the subject of this work did not call

\* De Pudicit, c. 21.

upon him to express any of the peculiar opinions of this sect.

It is probable that Tertullian did not remain always in the same connection with Montanism ; at any rate, he did not go with them to the same extremes which they professed : the probability is, that he formed a middle course between the church party, and that of Montanus. Some of his works evidently aim to lessen the points of difference between the two, while other productions of his pen have little or no Montanistic peculiarities.

His apology was written at Carthage, and addressed to the governors of proconsular Africa. At the time it was written, the Christians were exposed to the unrestrained violence of the people ; as well as the action of certain laws which existed against all who professed the Christian religion. It is supposed that the old and aggravating edicts of Nero were still in force ; but Mosheim states,\* that, "In the beginning of the second century, there were no laws in force against the Christians ; for the senate had annulled the cruel edicts of Nero ; and Nerva had abrogated the sanguinary laws of his predecessor, Domitian ;" yet, he asserts again, in a few succeeding chapters, that, "The imperial laws against Christians were not abrogated, and the iniquitous edicts of Trajan and Marcus Antonius were still in force." There was, consequently, a door open to the fury and injustice of corrupt magistrates, as often as they were

\* Cent. ii, part 1, c. 2.

pleased to exercise them on the church.”—Persecutions increased, when the governors of the provinces were cruel; if, however, they were humane, and acted from a sense of justice, Christians had temporary repose.

There are many interesting occurrences connected with the persecutions of these times. The tribunal of the proconsul Saturninus, of Numidia, became the scene of Christian firmness and zeal on the one hand, and of cruelty on the other. There lived in the town of Scillita, a band of Christians whose faith and works were making havoc in all the vicinity; but they were not permitted to proceed in their labor of love, as they were soon arrested and brought before the proconsul. Saturninus said to them, “You may receive pardon from our emperors, if you will return in good earnest to our gods.” One of them replied, “We have done no evil to any man—we have spoken no evil of any man; nay, for all the wrongs which you have inflicted on us, we have only thanked you. We praise, for all his dispensations, the true Lord and King.” The proconsul replied, “We too are pious, and we swear by the genius of our emperor, our lord, and we pray for his welfare, which you must also do.” On this, Speratus, who answered for the rest, said, “I know of no genius of the ruler of this earth, but I serve my God in heaven, whom no man hath ever seen, nor can see. I have never stolen any thing from any man; I pay, scrupulously, all the taxes and tributes which are due from me, for I acknowledge

the emperor as my ruler, but I can worship only my Lord, the King of kings, the Lord of all nations." They were remanded to prison, with the hope that time would work a change in their mind, while their inevitable fate, if they persevered, was kept before them. But on the next day they were found as firm as at first, and three days more were allowed them to deliberate upon the matter. They informed the proconsul, however, that he need not suppose that time, or prisons, or death, could ever change their determination; they declared that they were Christians, and bid him dispose of them as best suited his purposes. They were finally condemned to be beheaded. When they received their sentence at the judgment seat of the proconsul, they all thanked God; and on arriving at the place of execution, they kneeled down together and expressed their thanks to God, that they were counted worthy to suffer in the cause of Jesus Christ.

In Carthage the persecution increased: three young men, and two women, catechumens of the church, were seized and brought to the tribunal of justice. The men were named Stevocatus, Saturninus, and Secundulus—and the women, Perpetua and Felicitas. Perpetua was the mother of an infant, her father and husband were heathens, but her mother was a Christian.

The deacons of the church, finding them crowded together with all sorts of criminals, purchased for them a better apartment, in which they were baptized and received the communion. The father of Per-

petua used every exertion to save his daughter from so horrid a catastrophe, and he exhorted her to behold her infant, and to save his family and himself the disgrace of her public execution. "Take pity on thy father's grey hairs, take pity on thy tender child, offer sacrifices for the prosperity of the emperor!" cried the old man. "That," said she, "I cannot do; I am a Christian." She afterwards said to some one, who upbraided her on account of her father, "his unhappy age pained my heart as deeply as if I myself were in his case." At her baptism she said, the spirit prompted her to ask for nothing but patience, and her manner, during her sufferings and end, evinced that she did not ask amiss.

Felicitas, when she returned from the tribunal, was taken with violent sufferings and pain; during which the jailor asked her how she could stand before the beasts, if she could not bear her sufferings better; she replied, "What I suffer now, I suffer by myself, but then it will be another who will suffer for me, because I suffer for Him!" When they were about to suffer the sentence which was pronounced against them; by being thrown to wild beasts at an approaching festival, preparations were made, according to custom, to dress them in the garb of priests—the men as priests of Saturn, and the women as priestesses of Ceres. At this they revolted, and urged that as they had voluntarily offered themselves to suffer, their exemption from such customs should be granted, with which their persecutors complied, and

they were suffered to appear in the area in their own apparel.

They were now ushered into the amphitheatre, amidst the shouts of, "The impious to the beasts !" "Let loose the beasts !" At the sound of the trumpet, the chief of the Retiarii crossed the area, in order to open the den of tigers, now furious with hunger, and of distinguished fierceness. The second trumpet sounded, and the iron gate of the tiger's cave grated upon its hinges. All had been noise and confusion ; but now, such was the silence, that the prayers of the martyrs were distinctly heard. The furious beasts rushed into the arena with fearful roarings, and an involuntary emotion seized the sufferers ; but they soon obtained the victory over their fears, and composure and triumph marked their conduct amidst the rage of hungry beasts, and the pains of a cruel death. A moment since the cry was, "Let them perish ;" but now, a fiendish interest calms down the crowd, and they watch the scene with savage satisfaction. Blinded by idolatry, humanity was extinguished in a fondness for scenes of blood. The children of Brutus, who heaped curses upon the great Pompey for arraying elephants in fierce combat against each other, were not here !—What a mighty change had come over the spirit of a mighty people !

Just before the period in which Tertullian's apology was written, the Christians at Carthage were also persecuted with great cruelty ; such was the severity of the governors, that they did not spare members of

their own families who became Christians. In order, therefore, that the truth might reach these persecutors in high places, as there was no other way to prevent the obstruction of public justice, he addressed the emperor.

The spirit and boldness of Tertullian, is shown in the open and pointed manner of the address ; he says : "And now, O worshipful judges ! proceed with your show of justice, and believe me, ye will be still more and more just in the opinion of the people, the oftener you make them a sacrifice of Christians. Crucify, torture, condemn, grind us all to powder if you can ; your injustice is an illustrious proof of our innocence ; and for the proof of this, it is that God permits us to suffer ; and by your late condemnation of a Christian woman to the lust of a pander, rather than the rage of a lion, you notoriously confess that such a pollution is more abhorred by a Christian, than all the torments and deaths you can heap upon her. But do your worst, and rack your inventions for torturing Christians. It is all to no purpose, you do but attract the notice of the world, and make it full the more in love with our religion. The more you mow us down the thicker we spring up—the Christian blood you spill is like the seed you sow ; it springs from the earth again and fructifies the more."

He proceeds to show that while the vilest criminal was allowed legal privileges, was heard in his own defence, and permitted to have an advocate to plead his cause, Christians were unjustly condemned with-



out the privilege of being allowed to answer for themselves. He sets forth the injustice and cruelty of sanguinary laws; the possibility of their being abrogated; and the lenient conduct of many just princes as an example of such towards the Christians. Not content, however, with a defence of his brethren, he makes a vigorous attack upon their adversaries: and in a strain of the bitterest satire, he exhibits how much they had degenerated from their Roman ancestors.

After he refutes the arguments employed against the object of Christian worship, in a strain of great beauty, he shows who the God is, that Christians adore, thus: "The object of our worship is one God, who made out of nothing the whole frame of this universe, furnished with all the elements, and bodies, and spirits, by his word, which commanded; by his wisdom, which ordained; by his power, which ruled; for the glory of his own majesty; whence also the Greeks denominated the world by a word,\* which implies order and beauty. God is invisible, although plainly seen; incomprehensible by touch, although represented to us by his gracious revelation; inappreciable, though all our senses bear testimony to his existence. Hence he is the true God, since he is immensely great, but that which can be seen by the ordinary senses, or touched, or defined, is less than the eyes, by which it is discerned, and the hands by the contact of which it is defiled, and the senses, by

\*Κοσμος.

which it is discovered. But that which is immense is known to itself alone. This it is, which causes God to become intelligible, although he cannot be fully understood. The immensity of his being presents him to our minds as at once known and unknown. And in this, in short, consists the guilt of those who will not know him of whom they cannot be ignorant. Would you have this proved from his manifold and great works, by which we are surrounded and sustained, and filled, sometimes with delight, and sometimes with alarm? Would you have this proved from the testimony of the soul itself, which, although weighed down and confined by its prison, the body, although surrounded by evil customs, although enervated by lusts and passions, although enslaved to false gods, yet, when it does come to itself, as it were, from intoxication, or sleep, or some grievous sickness, from which it is restored to its natural state of health, then speaks of God by this name only, because it is the proper name of the true God, then "the great God," "the good God," and "what God shall give," is the language in every one's mouth. In like manner, the ordinary expressions, "God knows," "I leave it to God," and "God will restore it to me," all testify that he is the universal judge. O glorious testimony of the soul, naturally impressed with the truth of Christianity! And when she gives utterance to these sentiments, her eyes are directed, not to the capitol, but to heaven. For she knows that there is the habitation of the liv-

ing God, that he is the author of her being, and there the place whence she came down."

This apology arrested for a time the progress of persecution. No one had reasoned the matter with these magistrates before, and such was the effect of this production, that when the emperor returned to Carthage, and learned what had occurred, he became ashamed, and disavowed all connection with the outrages which his officers had perpetrated; and went so far as to make a public apology for the atrocities of Plantianus, one of the magistrates, who was most distinguished in the cruelties of this persecution.

## CHAPTER XX.

### TERTULLIAN—CONTINUED.

North African Doctrines—Tertullian taught Millenarianism—Irenæus upon the same Subject—The Gross Perversion of this Doctrine—Nepos at the head of the Chiliasts—His Book—The Influence of His Views upon the Alexandrian Church—Succeeded by Korakion—The Zeal of Dionysius—His Success in Terminating the Controversy—Foundation of the Tertullianists—His Character and Fame.

THE doctrines of the North African church, which proceeded from this Christian teacher, may be summed up, thus: The first man had every capability of manifesting the image of God, through his spiritual and moral nature; but these powers were not developed, although that development depended upon the free will of man. The nature of man was pure, and through communion with God would have been able to attain to a *divine* and imperishable life; so that it would have for ever been removed from the power of death. Man turned aside from the communion of God, and became subjected to sin and death; both of which notions were included in the term, *φθαρτά*, the opposite of *ἀφθαρσία*, which signified *divine*, imperishable, and holy life. The harmony of the divine and human wills having been broken by

sin, the consequence was, a rending of the whole nature of man, and a connection with an evil spirit, instead of God ; and, consequently, there was entailed upon the whole race, the spirit of evil, or the evil spirit of the world; *spiritum mundi universo generi suo tradidit*.

Tertullian taught that the soul of the first man contained the undeveloped seed of all mankind, or was the source from whence all souls emanated, and that the moral qualities of man were only modifications of the substance of souls through the first man. So that sinfulness and souls were both propagated together, and we became corrupted in our first great progenitor. He believed man's nature was akin to God, and that sin was sin, only as it was in contrast with this element of man's nature. He says,\* "The corruption of man's nature, is a second nature, which has its own God and Father ; namely, the author of this corruption himself, but still in such a way that good is also present in the soul, that original, divine and genuine good which is properly natural to it. For that which is from God is not so much extinguished as dimmed. For it may be dimmed because it is not God, but it cannot be extinguished because it is from God. Wherefore, as light, which is obstructed, nevertheless remains, but does not appear if the obstruction is sufficiently dense, so also the good, which is in the soul, being oppressed by the evil, in conformity to its own peculiar nature, either remains entirely in-

\* De Anima, c. 41.

active, while its light remains hidden, or when it finds its freedom, shines out where an opportunity is given. Thus some are very good, and some are very wicked, and yet all souls are one race; and also in the very best something of wickedness, for God alone is without sin, and Christ is the only man wholly sinless, for Christ is also God. The divine nature of the soul breaks forth into anticipations in consequence of its original goodness. . . . Therefore, no soul is without guilt, because none is without the seed of good." He considered that grace, by its divine influence in our corrupt nature, communicates a higher power than that which resides within, in virtue of man's free will.

As a Montanist, Tertullian taught Millenarianism, (Chiliasmus,) which obtained very extensively in the church in these times; although at Rome it was branded as heretical; a presbyter, Caius, wrote against it, and attributed its origin to Cerenthus, the Gnostic, whom he charged with forging the Apocalypse for the promotion of this doctrine. Irenæus was a Chiliast, who held that the Millennial kingdom was to be a state of preparation for the saints, who were to be then fitted for a higher state during its existence, by a more perfect revelation of God, in all that glory which is now hidden from them.\* But the opinions of Irenæus is to be traced to the same source as that of Tertullian, who, though a Montanist, yet he received it from a Jewish source. The

\* See p. 231.

churches mostly entertained it, except where they were anti-Jewish in their origin and spirit.

The spirit of Montanism gave to Millenarianism a variety of gross and sensuous images, and instead of confining it to the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, it gave it a fanciful turn, and embodied religious ideas in the grossest sensuality.

The Alexandrian teachers opposed this sensuous chiliasm; as their spirit tended to the spiritualization of all ideas about the kingdom of God and of Christ; and an angry controversy ensued, which drew forth all the ability and zeal of parties.

There lived at this time, in Egypt, a zealous partisan of the sensuous chiliasts' party, by the name of *Nepos*, a bishop of the Arsenoite Nomos, who wrote a defence of his opinions in opposition to the Alexandrian school. This book\* obtained great popularity, and the clergy of this region occupied themselves more with the opinions of *Nepos*, than the teachings of the sacred scriptures; and whole sections withdrew from a connection with the Alexandrian church.

The circumstances, which concluded this controversy so favorably, occurred some five years after the death of Tertullian; they are as follows: *Nepos* died, and *Korakion*, a pastor of a country congregation, stood in his place as the leader of his party. *Dionysius*, bishop of Alexandria, being a man of great prudence and learning, and not forgetting his calling as

\* The title of which is Εἰς ἕνα τῶν Ἀλληγοριστῶν—a Refutation of the Allegorists.

a Christian *pastor*, in the dignities of episcopacy, strove to bring back his erring brethren to what he conceived to be the truth. He therefore repaired in person to the congregations of those pastors who taught the theory of *Nepos*, and convened the clergy, and permitted the laity to be present at their assembly, where, for three days, from morning until night, he discussed the theory, with the work of *Nepos* before him. The clergy, who defended the opinions of *Nepos*, were desired to urge all their objections to the bishop's positions, and he continued to answer them until he succeeded in turning both clergy and laity from their theory: and even *Korakion* was so convinced, that he arose in the midst of the assembly and retracted his former opinions, and declared his conviction of the truth of the bishop's views. After this, *Dionysius* wrote in the following manner: "I love *Nepos*, for his faith, his diligence, his intimate acquaintance with the holy scriptures, and in consequence of the constant custom of psalmody, composed by him, and diligently introduced into the churches, and I honor the man more, because he is already entered into his rest. But the truth is dearer and of more value to me than aught besides; we must praise him and agree with him, when he says any thing that is right; but we must examine and set him right when he writes what does not appear to be true." The spirit of which remarks shows the secret of his wonderful success.

In the latter part of his life, *Tertullian* founded a



sect called Tertullianists ; they flourished some time after his death, but soon lost their identity among the schisms and parties which sprang up. He built himself a church, in which he continued to teach until his death. This was the rallying point for his followers, until, for the want of such another leader, and other causes, they became extinct.

His writings exhibit how richly his mind was stored with knowledge, while they display great brilliancy of imagination, and unrivalled keenness of sarcasm. In describing his style, the bishop of Lincoln says, "He frequently hurries his hearers along by his vehemence, and surprises them by his vigor, as well as the inexhaustible fertility of his imagination ; but his copiousness is without selection, and there was in his character a propensity to exaggeration which affected his language, and rendered it inflated and unnatural. He is indeed the harshest and most obscure of writers, and the least capable of being accurately represented in a translation." He had a great fund of varied learning, but it was confusedly mixed in his thoughts, so that, when he gave expression to those thoughts, with the ardent character of his mind, he expressed himself badly, and his depth of thought was not expressed with logical clearness and judgment. But in embracing Christianity he entered a new world, and had to create, out of rough Punic Latin, a new language, with which to express new spiritual views ; and he often fails for the want of words to express what seemed to be flowing from a lively imagination, with great enthusiasm and feeling.

Although the heretical opinions of Tertullian threw a cloud over his fame, that fame was not totally eclipsed. As he was the first, so he is the prince among the Latin writers of the church; and his works will live with the church as a monument of his greatness. An excellent writer in the fifth century who was sensible of his defects, conceived of his character in terms of high panegyric; and regards, very justly, the innovation of Origen as more dangerous than the heresy of Tertullian. The ancient church bears ample testimony, and it seems to have been deeply impressed with his acuteness, energy, learning and eloquence. Jerome says, that Cyprian never passed a day without reading some portion of Tertullian's works; "and he used frequently to say, *give me my master*, meaning Tertullian." He was so powerful in argument, that in the controversy with the opinions of Praxeas, he is said to have detected and uprooted that heresy, and made Praxeas sign a formal recantation of his doctrines. He wrote against Marcion with great credit and success, and his works indicate no ordinary fertility of mind, as they are clear of repetition—a quality which Augustine did not possess. A quaint writer says of him, "This know, Marcion and Apelles, Praxeas and Hermogenes, Jews, Gentiles, Gnostics, and divers others: whose blasphemous opinions he has overthrown with his many and great volumes, as it had been with thunderbolts." He seems to be characterised by the power to sharpen a single point, by clearing it of all

that is extrinsic to it, and then to exhaust it upon his opponents. Thoughts seem to flash on his mind like lightning, while he has the power to hurl them at his adversaries with the same clearness and power. "He flashed, he thundered, he shook Greece." But he had his faults, and wanting in apostolic power and direction, is in the same category with the other fathers of the church.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

**First Preaching in Private Houses—Meetings on the Lord's Day—Churches in Houses—The Necessity for Erecting Churches—Their Style—Use of Symbols—No Worship Paid to the Cross—Use made of the Sign of the Cross—Veneration for the East—Seasons of Prayer—Customs of Public Assemblies—Public and Private Fasts—Reading the Scriptures and Preaching—Collections—The Variety in these Customs—The Lord's-Day Sacred—The Importance Attached to the Reading of Scripture—The Sermons among the Greeks—Its Neglect at Rome—Church Singing.**

No age witnessed greater zeal in spreading the gospel of Christ than this; trusting little in the *opus operatum* of forms, the first teachers sought, by the truth alone, to touch the heart and reform the life. Yet the arrangements were simple, and the truth which wrought such powerful effects, was closetted, and like its great author, could be found, at times only in a manger. We find the first preachers in private houses, discoursing to a few humble inquirers after life; no splendid dome arched above them, nor display of architectural skill, in the place where they preached. A private room set apart for daily instruction by some wealthy member, was the place

where the foundation was laid, for a Christian church. Here Christians met, until they became too numerous, and were either divided into smaller numbers, or had a church erected for their accommodation. Where it was practicable, the whole society met together on the Sabbath ; but when this was dangerous to the safety of the members, on account of persecution, the divisions were kept up in private rooms, and they continued to meet daily.

St. Paul speaks of churches in the houses of particular individuals. "The church in his house" cannot allude to the places of assembly for the whole church, for, in many instances, the phrase is particularly distinguished from the whole church : as, for instance, the church "that is in the house" of Aquilas and Priscilla, and then "all the brethren," as distinguished from these particular divisions. Justin Martyr answers the question, "Where do you assemble ?" in the following manner : "Where each one can and will ; you believe, no doubt, that we all meet together in one place ; but it is not so, the God of the Christians is not stuck up in a room, but being invisible, he fills both heaven and earth, and is honored every where by the faithful." He also informs us, that it was his custom, when he went to Rome, to dwell in one particular spot, and those who were instructed by him, or listened to his discourses, assembled at his house.

But it soon became necessary to erect churches, as societies could not assemble on the Sabbath without

them, and in the third century, we find them named in the edicts of emperors.\* But they could not have been other than very humble houses, if they were commodius, for it was the absence of all pomp and show that always struck the heathen with the remarkable contrast it afforded to the outward pomp of other religions ; and drew forth the exclamation, "no temples, no altars, no sacrifices, no images."

Celsus, the most wily opponent of Christianity, in those days, endeavored to show the absurdity of such a religion ; a religion which had neither forms, nor temples, nor images ; but Origen, in reply to this argument, says, "In the highest sense, the temple and the image of God are in the human nature of Christ ; and hence, also, in all the faithful who are animated by the spirit of Christ, living images ! with which no statue of Jove or Phidias, is fit to be compared." There are frequent expressions throughout the writings of the early church, which show the great contempt in which all images and symbols were held, and it was regarded as heathenish in the extreme, to employ them in any way. Clement, of Alexandria, says, "for those men ought not to engrave idolatrous forms, to whom the use of them is forbidden." Gradually, however, this feature of heathenism returned, and engrafted itself upon the usages of Christians ; it commenced by symbols upon the cups, and signet rings, where they represented the parables of the New Testament ; or the Holy Ghost by a dove,

\* The edict of Gallienus contains the following terms, *θεσπιασμων τωτων*

or the Christian church by a ship, or Christian joy by a lyre ; or the emblem of Christian hope by an anchor ; and it is believed, that as early as the third century, images made their way into the churches, and their walls were frequently painted with a variety of representations. The council of Elvira, took this matter into serious consideration, and enacted that "objects of reverence and worship shall not be painted upon the wall."\*

Great effort has been made in later times, to show that even in the time of Tertullian, some kind of worship was paid to the cross, and some expressions in the sixteenth chapter of his apology, have been supposed to confirm that impression ; the passage reads thus : "Those, again, who conceive we pay too much honor to the cross, are themselves our fellow worshippers. If adoration is paid to any wood, the particular shape signifies nothing, provided the material is the same : the form is of no importance, if that be regarded as the substance of a god." In this part of the apology, Tertullian is refuting several calumnious charges made against the Christians ; and shows that even if it were true, as alleged in this instance, the worshippers of false gods were in the same condemnation, applying the *argumentum ad hominem*, of which this apology will show he was particularly fond. He is evidently refuting the charge that Christians worshipped the cross, as the context plainly shows ;

\* Non quod colitur et adoratur, in parietibus depingatur. Concil. Illiberet, C. 33.

as well as the passage itself, and there cannot be a construction put upon any thing in the apology, that favors the notion. In the time of Tertullian there was, no doubt, considerable use made of the *sign* of the cross. A well known passage in his writings\* shows that this sign was used not only in baptism, but to consecrate the rising and the rest, the going out and coming in, and all the actions of daily life; it was also an involuntary sign, made whenever any thing of fearful nature surprised them. But it was used as a sign of faith in Christ at first; and when it became corrupted, and supernatural, sanctifying and preservative powers were ascribed to it; among the true followers of Christ it was abandoned.

The opponents of heathenism likewise charged Christians with worshipping the sun, from the custom which prevailed of turning the face towards the east in prayer, and in the same apology of Tertullian they are defended against this charge in the following language: "Others again, with more reason, believe that the sun is the object of our adoration. If this be the case, we are joined with the Persians, although we do not adore its image painted upon a banner; since we have the sun itself with us, wherever we go, set in the heavens as in a shield. This suspicion, however, has arisen from our well known custom of turning to the east when we pray."


This veneration for the east, in very early times, caused churches to be erected with the principal en-

\*Treatise de Coronâ Militis, C. 3.



trance to the west, and the altar to the east. The splendid church, however, which was erected at Tyre, by Paulinus, the bishop, in the beginning of the fourth century, is an exception to this custom, as the entrance was to the east, and the altar in the centre; so also is the church at Antioch another exception, as it had the altar towards the west; but it is likely that this custom of turning to the east in worship, was not long regarded as important, and soon passed out of use.

As many of the customs of the early Christians were borrowed from the Jews, the Jewish seasons of prayer were copied, and they set apart, according to the then divisions of the day, the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours, for private devotion. But early Christians were much given to prayer, and in connection with established seasons, were added all the important seasons of the times, as well as all transactions which relate to temporal and spiritual concerns. Tertullian says, that "it becomes the believer to take no food, to enter no bath without the intervention of prayer; for the strengthening and refreshing of the body, the heavenly ought to precede the earthly." When he received a Christian from a distance into his house and refreshed him with food, he would not dismiss him without prayer; as it was always thought that the blessings of prayer were greater than food or raiment. Speaking of the brother who is entertained as a stranger, or from a distant land, this same writer says: "But he himself, after he has



been received by the brethren, must not prize the earthly refreshment he has received higher than the heavenly ; for immediately his faith will be condemned ; or, how canst thou, after the command of the Lord, say, 'Peace be to this house,' unless thou returnest, to those who dwell in the house, the wish of blessing which they have first bestowed upon thee."

In public assemblies, it was customary to pray kneeling ; but in those days especially dedicated to the memory of the resurrection of Christ, the whole congregation stood up, to represent that Christ had raised up a polluted and fallen world by his death and resurrection. Origen also indicates that the custom was to stretch out the hands in prayer. "Before a man," says he, "stretches out his hands to heaven, he must raise his soul thither." Again, he says, "For we cannot doubt, that out of a thousand possible attitudes of the body, those with outspreading of the hands, and uplifting of the eyes, must be preferred to all others, as giving some representation of the disposition proper to prayer."

Two days in the week were particularly set apart for fasting and prayer—Wednesday and Friday—but the Sabbath day was a day of festivity, and not of fasting. Justin Martyr says, "We all assemble together on Sunday, because it is the first day in which God changed darkness and matter, and made the world. On the same day also, Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. For he was crucified the day before that of Saturn : and on the day after that

of Saturn, which is the day of the sun, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and taught them what we now submit to your consideration"—thus assigning the reason for the institution. But to show that it was a day of festivity, Tertullian says, "In like manner, if we do observe Sunday, as a day of festivity, not from any worship which we pay to the sun, but from a very different reason, we are, in that custom, closely allied to such of you as set apart the Saturday for a day of ease and fasting; although even in that, they deviate from the Jewish custom, which they have ignorantly followed." The service of the Sabbath in the primitive church is thus described by Justin Martyr: "On the day which is called Sunday, there is an assembly in one place of all who dwell either in towns or in the country; and the memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as the time permits. Then, when the reader hath ceased, the president delivers a discourse, in which he reminds and exhorts them to the imitation of all these good things. We then all stand up together, and put forth prayers. Then, as we have already said, when we cease from prayer, bread is brought, and wine, and water; and the president in like manner offers up prayers and praises with his utmost power: and the people express their assent by saying, Amen. The consecrated elements are then distributed, and received by every one, and a portion is sent by the deacons to those who are absent." The collection for the poor was also taken

up and deposited, according to Justin Martyr, with the president who relieved the necessities of the fatherless, widows, and such as were in necessities from disease, or any other cause.

There, however, was considerable variation in these customs, particularly in keeping the Sabbath as a day of feasting. In the Oriental churches, through the influence of the Jewish converts, they retained both the Sabbath and Sunday, and omitted the custom of standing in prayer. And in Rome, where opposition to Judaism manifested itself very strongly, that opposition produced the custom of celebrating Sunday in particular as a fast day. Tertullian reproaches the Romans for depriving the Sabbath of its becoming honor ; as Friday was a fast day, they sometimes continued the fast over the Sabbath as a preparation for the communion on Sunday ; and the council of Elvira seems to have thought the protracted fast of sufficient importance to oppose by formal enactment.

It is very manifest that, at first, the Lord's day was kept sacred, and there was transferred to it all the law pertaining to the Sabbath under the old dispensation ; but the early Christians, out of deference to the Jewish, particularly in the western churches, fasted on the Jewish Sabbath, and kept the Lord's day. There was, however, a considerable controversy between the Oriental and Western churches, in reference to this subject : but, in no instance, it is believed, in the early days of the church, has the necessity of keeping the Christian Sabbath been brought into controversy.

We have seen that the written word was read as an important part of divine service in the early church. It was such in the synagogues of the Jews, and their customs passed mainly to Christian assemblies; but the importance of this part of Christian worship is sensibly recognized, and the study of the scriptures urged upon all professing Christians, by the fathers of the church. Irenæus says, "These things are placed before our eyes, openly, and without ambiguity in the different books of scripture. All these may be equally understood *by all*. They must be very stupid who close their eyes against so clear a revelation, and refuse to admit the light of the preached word." Clement of Alexandria, says, "Let him whose eyes are obscured by a bad education, and by false doctrine, hasten to the light, the truth, to the holy scriptures, which will reveal to him what cannot be written." Origen says, "My son, read, above all, with deep attention the holy word of God." Such were the teachings of the three first centuries! The prophetic parts of the Old Testament were read in their assemblies, because they pointed to the Messiah, then followed the gospels, and the epistles of the apostles.

What an important part of the service this must have been! As few could read, and copies of the scriptures were scarce and expensive, they supplied the defect by frequent reading in public, and in many parts, where the knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages was confined to a few of the higher classes, as in many parts of Egypt and Syria.

an interpreter, or dragoman, was employed, who repeated to the people, in their language, the word, as read from the scriptures by the church officer, so that all could hear and understand.

The preaching of the gospel then followed the reading of the scriptures, as Justin Martyr says, "The president instructs the people in a discourse, and incites them to the imitation of those good examples." Among the Greeks the sermon formed a more important part of the service than among the Latins; with the former, it was more lengthy and studied. This may account, in part, for the discontinuance of this important part of the public worship of God in Rome, for in the first half of the fifth century it was entirely abolished. With a disinclination for this duty of the Christian minister, such was the prevalence of sensuous shows, and liturgical rites, that, compared to such, the instruction of the people became, in the estimation of the Roman clergy, unimportant.

The song of praise was continued in the Christian assemblies, and they sang "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," and made melody in their hearts to the Lord. Hymns, composed for the occasion, were used, as well as the Psalms of David. These hymns were quoted in the unitarian controversy which existed about the end of the second century; and they were appealed to as evidences of the worship of Jesus Christ as God, among the earliest Christians.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### CYPRIAN.

**His Birth and Parentage—His Learning—Aristocratical and Aspiring—His Sudden Elevation—Opposition to his Election—Cyprian's Position—Unity of the Church—His Great Error—Reproved by a Layman—His Letter in Reply—Novatus—Ordination of Felicissimus—Attack upon the Character of Felicissimus—Cyprian Withdraws from Carthage—Censured Therefor—Defends Himself at Rome—The Effects of the Persecution—Position of the Lapsi—Exhorted to Patience or Martyrdom—Cyprian's Inconsistency—Changes his Position—Same in Relation to Undue Honor to Martyrs—Purgatory—Custom of Celebrating the Anniversary of the Martyrs—Sacrifice of the Mass—Cyprian's Want of Independence—Intention to Return Changed—Death of Decius and Cyprian's Return.**

**THASCIUS CÆCILIVS CYPRIAN** was born in the city of Carthage about A. D. 190. He was an African and a heathen; but his education, talents, and piety, raised him to be the successor of Donatus, bishop of his native city. Carthage was then a great city, and Africa had her great men; but alas! how are the mighty fallen. The torch of Scipio Africanus and the sword of the Saracen have left nothing of Carthage but a name; and woful havoc has been made with the literature, science, and religion of a mighty people.



Cyprian acquired great consideration on account of his learning, and the zeal with which he conducted some of the most important controversies of his time. He was aristocratical; and, before his conversion, possessed numerous attendants, and splendid equipage. He adopted the name of Cæcilius, who was the instrument, under God, of his conversion, and a man of deep piety and exemplary life. But Cyprian was evidently aspiring in his course, for he had scarcely professed conversion to the faith three years, before he had attained from the humble catechumen, to the office of bishop—an office that he converted into an order with all the powers of monarchy by divine right. It was an elevation that did not accord with the views and feelings of many of his fellow laborers; and which laid the foundation of one of the most fatal perversions of the objects and designs of the Christian ministry. The opposition to his election was among both the clergy and laity, and five of the most prominent of the presbyters, with their flocks, formed themselves into a strong party, and took a firm position against him, with a determination not to submit to his episcopal encroachments.

Cyprian armed himself for the contest, and took strong views of his episcopal authority; claiming spiritual powers, which he urged the office conferred by divine right, and endeavored to alarm his opponents, by insisting that it was an arrogant and daring assumption to oppose a bishop.

This party began to feel too deeply the encroach-

ments of a growing power upon their rights, and determined to preserve their influence in the government of the church, for Cyprian was a supporter of the hierarchical party, which now began to insist upon new powers in the pastors of churches, foreign to established usage; and insist upon the *outward* church, as necessary to confer salvation. Upon this subject, Cyprian was the first who wrote, as his work *De Unitate Ecclesiae* shows. It was here, that, for the first time, the sentiment was advanced, that certain forms are necessary for the existence of the Christian church, and the salvation of believers. The work contains much that is false, is calculated to foster a prelatical and priestly pride, and set up a visible establishment, instead of an inward spiritual union with Jesus Christ, the source of all spiritual life.

Cyprian was not enough upon his guard against that potent evil, which always seeks to fix itself upon some of the best qualities, which servants of the church possess; nor against those overheated suggestions which follow human pride. Struggling with his fellow laborers for the full powers of his episcopal office, he found the rock upon which he stranded. He forgot the hole of the pit, from whence he was digged, in the greatness and power of the bishop, "appointed by God himself, and acting in the name of Christ." He strove to conquer his enemies by insisting upon the inalienable rights of the episcopacy, and appealed to supernatural revelations and visions of the night, which he supposed would be taken for

the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. He warned his opponents with a pretended heavenly voice ; when he said, "He who believes not the priest, will hereafter be obliged to begin to believe Christ, who avenges the priest." So marked were these innovations, that it impressed, at first, the simplest layman. A Christian, in Carthage, determined to approach him upon the subject, and point out his departures from primitive simplicity ; his name was Florentinus Prepius, who said to him, among other things, "The priests ought to be humble, for even Christ and his apostles were humble." Cyprian took this so much to heart, that he wrote Florentinus a letter, in which, instead of removing his impression, contributed the more to confirm them. From his lofty episcopal seat he appeals to the judgment seat of God, who had appointed him bishop ; and declaims against the man that would dare to judge of the priest appointed by God himself.

The five presbyters who headed the party opposed to Cyprian, presided over churches in or near Carthage ; they had exercised their authority in the discipline of the church ; and Novatus had ordained one of his followers as a deacon. Novatus was over a church on a hill, in or near Carthage, and was an enterprising opponent of the yoke of episcopal monarchy. He exhibited that indomitable spirit of freedom, which belongs to the church of Christ ; and stood forth fearfully against the encroachments of power ; notwithstanding Cyprian's declamations

against these infringements of his episcopal rights. Here, then, began the struggle between the monarchical and the original principles of church government: and, as a consequence, the first division of the church proper.

The person whom Novatus ordained, was Felicissimus, a man of enterprise, and extensive influence, and Cyprian regarded his ordination an infringement of his episcopal rights. Unfortunately for the character and fame of Novatus, all we know of him is gathered from deficient and *ex parte* documents. Cyprian brings against him accusations, which make him appear in a very unfavorable light; but they are evidently founded upon no just grounds, and bear the stamp of blind and impartial passion. It was represented, that he was about to be called to account, and punished for his offence, when the Decian persecution broke out, which suspended operations; and, in order to escape, he set on foot certain disturbances, and separated himself from the church. But this cannot be true, although well devised, for Cyprian himself acknowledges him to be a proper presbyter of the church, during the above named persecution.\*

During this persecution, Cyprian withdrew from Carthage; and although he had, in his own estimation, sufficient justification for his course, it was questioned among the members, and during his absence it was looked upon in the worst light; especially in view of his own opinions, of the nature and character

\* Epis. vi.

of his office. Many of the bishops had to retire until the fury of opponents subsided, for their presence inflamed the rage of the heathens, and they thought that the peace and security of their communities required their temporary absence. It was, however, regarded in the worst light, attributed to cowardice, and looked upon as a violation of the duties of the episcopal office. Even at Rome the impression was made that he had not acted as became a bishop. The Roman clergy wrote to the church at Carthage, and were evidently not inclined to approve either Cyprian's course, or the motives assigned by him, on account of it. In speaking of the act, they say, *quod utique recte fecerit*, "In which he may have done well."

Cyprian, when he saw this letter first, supposed it to be a forgery, but learning that his opponents had represented him at Rome, and that the impressions there were made against him, he wrote to the clergy of that city in justification of his course.

During this persecution, many were driven by fear or force—by torture and imprisonment, to the altars of the gods ; and their conduct was regarded as a denial of their faith, which involved an *ipso facto* excommunication. When more tranquil times came, however, many of them were painfully alive to their condition, and desired again to join the congregation in the worship of God, and partake of the Lord's Supper. The church was, at this time, without any defined plan in relation to these *lapsi*, or fallen brethren ; and Cyp-

rian regarded every denial of the faith *a mortal sin*; and any sin whatever, of this description, by which the baptismal covenant was once broken, placed the *lapsi* beyond the *absolution of the church*. He says, "These are the words of the Lord in warning: See! thou art become whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee! He gives the rule of life after he has bestowed soundness, and he does not allow men to run about afterwards unbridled; but rather as the man is bound to serve Him, He threatens him the more severely, because the guilt is less if a man sins before he knows the doctrine of the Lord; but *there is no more forgiveness for sins, when a man sins after he has begun to know the Lord.*" He, again, in his collection of Biblical Testimonies, lays down the same position more strongly, if possible, when he says, "That those who have sinned against God, no forgiveness can be imparted by the church." But he became ashamed of this, and after the heat of controversy had somewhat passed away—when these fallen ones of his church came with tears, declaring their ignorance, or the severity of the torture as a cause of their yielding to the flesh;—when the question was pressed home to his heart, are all these to remain for ever excluded from the communion of their brethren? in which communion, according to his doctrine, they could only be saved at last, his feelings gave way, he could not take such a responsible resolution; but he dared not act upon his own responsibility. They were exhorted to penitence and patience: he

told them, that when the persecution subsided, he would refer their cases to the ministry and membership of the churches ; but, says he : "He who cannot bear delay may obtain for himself a martyr's crown." His former position aroused his old opponents, and after an angry controversy, the *lapsi* were sustained in their applications.

His testimony against undue honor to martyrs was at one time clearly expressed ; and yet, he seems to have presented the same inconsistency in this, as in his position in relation to the *lapsi* ; for he afterwards granted absolution to many who presented to him certificates of peace, which were conferred upon them by some one of those who witnessed to the faith, by martyrdom. He conceded thereby the point in controversy, which he had most justly and powerfully declaimed against ;—that is, that exaggerated reverence, which became the source of superstition, should be paid to those who sealed their testimony for the Christian religion with their blood. He sought by this indecision, and half way defence of truth, to conciliate the multitude, and remove from himself the impression that was made, that he did not sufficiently honor the martyrs.\* He first combatted the confidence which superstition had given to the *intercession of martyrs*, and then supported it by yielding to those *lapsi* who had procured certificates of peace from martyrs, before their execution.

We learn from Cyprian himself, the practice which

\* Cyprian Epist. 39, p. 77.

now prevailed of offering up sacrifices upon the anniversary of the passion of the martyrs; and he speaks in praise of an episcopal arrangement, by which it was forbidden, under certain circumstances, to offer sacrifices for their repose.\* In his epistle to Antonianus, he also speaks of persons who had been long purified in the fire for their sins, ere they could be admitted into heaven.† From these expressions have been deduced the Papists' doctrine of purgatory, and the doctrine of prayers for the liberation of the souls of those confined therein.

But it is known that these doctrines of the Latin church had not an origin here, and were not really held at this time. It is true that the contests in reference to the *lapsi*, led to a very rigid discipline, and they were obliged to pass through *allegorical fires* of penitential austerities, before they could be received by the church, as restored members of the communion. This is clear from Cyprian's own language; he says, "When once we have departed hence, there is no longer any place of repentance, no longer any effectiveness of satisfaction. Here, life is either lost or held; here, we may provide for our eternal salvation by the worship of God, and the fruitfulness of faith. Let not any one then be retarded either by sin or length of years, from attending to salvation. To a person, while he remains in this world, repentance is never too late. Those who seek after and understand the truth, may always have an easy access to the in-

\* Epist. 1, p. 3.      † 55, p. 109.



dulgence of God. Even to the very end of your life, pray for your sins; and by confession and faith implore the only true Deity. To him who confesses, pardon is freely granted; to him who believes, a salutary indulgence is granted from the divine pity; and, immediately after death, he passes to a blessed immortality.”\*

It was the custom for a long time to celebrate the anniversary of the martyrdom of distinguished Christians. In the language of Tertullian, “On a certain annual day we make oblations for the dead for nativities.”† They meant, by nativities, the allegorical birth-day of the dead; they being born out of this present evil state into a life of blessedness in the better world. The oblations were of thanksgiving and praise for the happy departure of the blessed, and could not have been prayers for their release from purgatorial fires, as some suppose; for, as Cyprian expressly says, they are thanksgivings to God for having taken to himself the souls of the departed brethren.

But we should not pretermit the light in which the earlier writers viewed this subject; if, indeed, they had ever conceived of the doctrine of the Latin church, called *sacrifice of the mass*, alleged to Cyprian, and others of more recent times. Clement of Rome, who is better authority than either Cyprian or Tertullian—being more pure in doctrine, and much nearer the apostles than either, says, “When we have

\* Cyprian ad Demetrian, p. 196 and Epist. 12, p. 27.

† De Coron. Mil. iii, p. 449.

departed this life, there is no room for us in another, either to confess or to repent.”\* Polycarp discussed the resurrection of the dead, but is silent upon any thing like the doctrine of purgatory,† and Ignatius tells the Magnesians that, “Seeing all things have an end, there are set before us those two things at once, death and life : and every one shall depart into his own proper place.” So that with these three earliest writers—the purest and best of all the Christian fathers—there is nothing like these doctrines taught.

In all those matters, Cyprian exhibited a great want of independence in his own opinions, a singular fear of man, and a false and criminal policy as a minister of Jesus Christ.

He had now been absent the better part of a year, when the church was quieted, and the anger of his opponents appeared to be passed, Easter was drawing nigh, A. D. 251, and he thought he would return and celebrate that festival with his brethren in Carthage. But in this he was disappointed ; for the quiet which he had construed into the favor of his people, was the result of their union in opposition to his claims. He despatched deputies to give direction in relation to the funds for the poor, and attend to other necessary regulations. But the deacon Felicissimus, who was a man of great influence in Carthage, was in charge of this matter by his own party, and was not by any means disposed to yield to the authority of Cyprian. Finding a differ-

\* Epis. ad Cor. † Epist. ad Philip.

ent state of things from what he anticipated, Cyprian delayed until some time after ; when, upon hearing of the death of Decius Trajanus, upon the eve of the annual assembly of the North African bishops in their synod, he left the place of his concealment, and returned to Carthage.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CYPRIAN—CONTINUED.

**Cyprian at Home—Fortunatus Condemned by the Synod—Renewed Efforts of the Opposition—Send Deputies to Rome—Independence of Bishops—Rome Opposes the Episcopal Encroachments—Novatian at the Head of the Opposition—Novatus Driven to Rome—Unjust Charges Against Novatian—No Forgiveness Out of the Church—Difference about the Admission of the Lapsi—The Party Name—A True Church—Council of Carthage Against Novatian at Rome—Episcopal Ascendency.**


AFTER an absence of sixteen months, we find Cyprian now in the midst of his flock, using his personal influence against his opponents, and contending with Fortunatus, who had been elected bishop of Carthage, by the party who opposed his monarchical episcopal views in his absence. But Cyprian was possessed of great powers of persuasion, and had the advantage of his opponents in an influence over the bishops of North Africa, so that he procured, after a powerful effort, a sentence of condemnation against Fortunatus and his party. This had the tendency to cripple the influence of the party opposed to episcopal encroachments, and gave an ascendancy to Cyprian abroad.

Undismayed by the result of this synod, they de-

terminated to make known the righteousness of their cause to the churches, and sent deputies abroad to represent their cause, and gain, if possible, a decision in their favor.

They sent some to Rome, where they obtained a hearing, and produced an impression which would have procured for them the condemnation of Cyprian ; but Cornelius, who was then bishop of Rome, received a letter from Cyprian, appealing to his Roman character, and calling upon him to support the episcopal theocracy, and maintain the unity of the church, which he urged was founded upon their mutual connection against schismatics. Advocating the independence of bishops in their own diocesses, he says, "Those who are under our jurisdiction, ought not to run about, and, by their delusive arts and boldness, destroy the unity of the bishops, who are united together ; but they ought to plead their cause there, where they can have accusers and witnesses of their offence."

But at Rome the impression made was not to be easily destroyed, the presbyters and people, began to feel the encroachments upon them, by *their* prelates ; and were not disposed to submit quietly. The same spirit which arose to declaim against the innovations of Cyprian in Carthage, was aroused at Rome also, and Novatian was soon found at the head of a powerful party. This man had distinguished himself as a theological writer, and had taken the opposite ground from the church at Rome, on some important



doctrines in relation to the conditions of membership in the church. It seems, Novatian was, before his conversion, in a very deplorable state of mind, and is supposed to have been laboring under demoniacal influence, when an exorcist of the church was instrumental in his recovery and conversion to the faith. Finding in Christianity health, peace, and tranquillity, he became a zealous advocate and preacher, and was promoted to the ministry ; being ordained a presbyter by Fabian, the predecessor of Cornelius. But he was baptized in his sick bed, when he was thought to be near his end, and Cornelius made it a ground of objection to him, because it was against the law of the church, that a *clanicus* should be ordained. He was also a strict ascetic, and had retired into solitude whence he was called forth by the opposing party to take the lead in their defence and government, and was consequently ordained their bishop in the stead of Cornelius.

It seems that on the death of Fabian, Novatian pledged himself not to sue for the episcopal dignity ; although such was the reverence and respect for him, that many desired him to be the successor of Fabian. It is quite likely that Novatian had opposed the views now entertained of the episcopacy, and deemed it inconsistent with his principles to fill the office at that time ; when the necessity presented itself in the church for the maintenance of a *purser* episcopacy, he yielded to fill the office that he might carry out a polity opposed to the new episcopal encroachments.

Cyprian's ascendancy in Carthage now drove Novatus to Rome, where he found the principles which he professed and advocated, in the party of Novatian, and he entered warmly into the contest for their ascendancy. But at Rome the controversy seemed to be based upon what constituted true penitence, and what character could be properly assigned to the true church of Christ.

Novatian has been unjustly charged with holding the doctrine, that when the baptismal covenant is once broken by sin, no forgiveness can be obtained, but eternal condemnation is the consequence. In the debate which occurred about the conduct which implied a real denial of Christianity, Novatian never maintained that the Christian was a perfect saint, and as there was a supposed distinction between *venial* and *mortal* sins, "pecca mortalia" and "pecca venialia," he is misunderstood when he is supposed to be speaking of the forgiveness of sins by God. It is the decision of the church of which he speaks, and he contends that it has no right to forgive mortal sins, by which the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ, has been once forfeited: he says, "we must exhort them to repentance, and leave the forgiveness of their sins to God alone, who has the power to forgive sins." Cyprian, whose notions of the church could not allow that the forgiveness of sins could be *out* of the church, ridicules the doctrine of the Novatianists, thus: "Oh! what mockery of the deluded brethren! Oh! what a vain deception of those unhappy men, who are la-

menting ! To exhort them to penitence, by which they are to give satisfaction to God—and to withdraw from them the medicine, which might give them the means of this satisfaction ! To say to your brother : lament and shed tears, sigh day and night ! Do all the good in thy power to wash away thy sins, but after all, thou shalt *die without the church*. Thou must do the things pertaining to peace, but the peace thou *seekest* thou shalt never obtain !”\* But this last sentiment was not exactly Novatian’s views ; he exhorted them to seek to obtain their lost peace with God, but that no *man* can give a certain pledge that it was restored.

It seems that, during the persecution, many had sacrificed to the gods through fear, and there were those who supposed that it was not proper for the church to receive them again, yet, believed that they could be saved ; others supposed that they could be saved and ought to be received upon proper evidences of repentance ; but others again supposed, that they could never receive either the forgiveness of the church, or of God.

It will be recollected, that Cyprian had entertained the notion that no absolution could be granted to the *lapsi*, and that he had afterwards changed his views ; and that the council declared against him on this subject, and sustained the *lapsi* in their wish to return to the bosom of the church.

It is remarkable, that, in this attempted reform,

\* Ep. 55, ed. Ox.



like all those parties who have followed, in the history of the church, with similar views, an appellative of reproach should be the name under which they should be known, and of which they should not be ashamed. The Novatianists were called *ὡς καθαροί*, "the pure," because they held, that one essential mark of a true church, was *the holiness and purity of its individual members*. Novatian maintained, that a neglect of discipline, by permitting persons to remain in the church, who, by the commission of sins had violated the baptismal covenant, became corrupt, and by such corruption ceases to be a true church. It was, however, urged in opposition, that it was an arrogant assumption to exercise discipline by separating the real from the false members of the church, and that it was attempting too much, for man to do what Christ had reserved for himself in the last day, when he should separate the wheat from the tares.

Cyprian having completely changed his views, now writes, "Although there appear to be tares in the church, let not this disturb our faith or our charity, so as to induce us to leave the church. We must labor to belong to the wheat, that, when the wheat is gathered into the garners of the Lord, we may receive the recompense of our labors. The apostle says, 'in a great house, there are not only vessels of silver and gold, but vessels of wood and clay, and some to dishonor, some also to honor.' Let us, therefore, labor, as far as we are able, to be those golden or silver vessels. To destroy the vessels of clay, is *only given to*

*the Lord alone*, to whom the rod of iron has been given also. The servant cannot be greater than his Master, and no one can appropriate to himself what the Father has given to the Son, namely, to believe himself capable of carrying the winnowing fan, to cleanse and purify the threshing floor, or of separating the tares from the wheat.”\*

In all the views entertained by these controversialists, there was an admixture of error and great confusion of ideas in regard to the connection of outward and inward purity. It was certainly wrong to destroy the existence of the church altogether, because some were found in it of impure life; and it was equally wrong to call it an arrogant assumption to exercise discipline in the church, to the exclusion of those who were found living in violation of the law of God.

The council in Carthage declared in favor of Cornelius against Novatian in Rome; and, in return, the Roman bishops declared for Cyprian. These councils mutually determined upon the excommunication of Novatian and Fortunatus, and took such measures as they thought would be most effectual in establishing the monarchical episcopal party.

These measures gave the party in power the ascendancy, and the Novatianists had to extend themselves as a separate sect; and although they labored under all the reproaches of their opponents, who styled them schismatics, and excommunicated them

\* Ep. 55, p. 112, Ox. ed.

from the church, they struggled on, contending against power and prejudice, and propagated their views as schismatics ; but they always contended that they had the true and original position of the church, and the evidences of all history shows that they were the objectors to innovations foreign to the church in more early times, and maintained the original church polity.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### PERSECUTIONS.

**Decius Trajanus Ascends the Throne—Renews the Persecutions—Christians take Refuge in Distant Parts—Paul of Thebais the Father of Hermits—The Efforts to Force an Abjuration of the Faith—The Effect of the Edict in Alexandria—The Violence of the Persecution in Carthage—Instances of Cruelty on the one hand and Firmness and Faith on the other—Death to the Bishops—The Fatal Effects of Abjuration—Decius Diverted by War—His Death—Christians Recruit—Pestilence Renews the Persecutions—Valerian—Cyprian Brought to Trial and Banished—Efforts to Break up the Worship of Christians—New Edict—Sextus and Four Deacons Put to Death—The Plague at Carthage—Cyprian Recalled from Banishment and Put to Death.**

IN the midst of these angry controversies, Decius Trajanus having conquered Philip the Arabian, ascended the imperial throne, A. D. 249. He was a thorough and devoted pagan, and with great activity, wisdom and firmness, he so won the affections of the Roman people, that the senate adjudged him not inferior to Trajan, and gave him the title of *Optimus*. But he conceived that his predecessor had been criminally deficient in the execution of the old laws against Christians, so that he renewed, with great severity, the persecutions, and sought, by the most effectual means,

to crush Christianity. He saw, too, that Paganism was on the wane, for Christianity had made rapid strides, and he conceived that the only way to support the one, was by destroying the other.

Christians were now required to comply with the state religion; and every invention of prison discipline, torture and hunger, were employed to enforce an abjuration of the faith from them. Decius reigned about two years, but he made great havoc with the church. Christians "were driven from their houses, spoiled in their estates, tormented in their bodies; whips and prisons, fires and wild beasts, scalding pitch and melted wax, sharp stakes and burning pincers," were but some of the instruments of torture employed to break up the church. A day was appointed, before which period all Christians were to appear before the magistrates, renounce their religion, and offer sacrifices to the gods. But many fled to distant parts, where they could avoid these calamities, abandoning home and friends and earthly prospects, rather than renounce their profession. Others chose rather to commit themselves to the barrenness of rocks and mountains, and the mercy of wild beasts, than to their merciless tormentors. Among those who fled to the wilderness, was a youth of fifteen, of Thebais, by the name of Paul. Pursued by the tormentors he fled into the deserts of Egypt; and finding a large and convenient cavern in a rock, which had been occupied as a place of deposit for valuable property in the time of Antony and Cleopatra, he

made it his home, and led a solitary life. Hermits have claimed him as the father of their race, and their retirement from the world has been made a virtue ; but this poor boy only fled from persecution ! He remained in this solitude until he was one hundred years of age. In the last part of his life he was visited by another, who had spent a great part of his time in similar solitude ; and who, after Paul's death, performed the last offices of humanity to him, by committing his body to the earth.

It seems that the punishment of death was not resorted to in every instance, for the policy seems to have been, to force a renunciation of faith, if possible. Some made a gain of this, and received pay from Christians for their freedom, and enrolled their names as having renounced their faith, for a fixed price. But this tacit abjuration of the faith was discountenanced, and condemned by the larger body of the church.

The effect of the edict of Decius, upon the church at Alexandria, is related by Dionysius, the bishop of that city ; he says, "All were thrown into consternation by this terrible edict, and many of the higher classes of citizens presented themselves from fear, immediately, partly on their own accord, partly brought by public necessity, and partly as they were brought by their relations and friends. And as each was called upon by name, they approached the ungodly sacrifice, some of them pale and trembling, not as if they were to perform a sacrifice, but as if they

themselves were to be victims slaughtered to idols: so that the multitude around treated them with bitter scorn and ridicule, and it was clear to all that they were alike afraid either to sacrifice or to die." But in speaking of those who remained steadfast, he says, "Some, after enduring the tortures up to a certain degree, gave in; but the blessed and steadfast pillars of the Lord, who were strengthened by Him, and received might and steadfastness from Him, as they were worthy of their firm faith, and acted up to it, became wonderful witnesses of His kingdom."

Among these there was a youth of fifteen, by the name of Dioscorus. His timid looks and youthful appearance promised his persecutors that, by torture, he would abjure; but they were much mistaken; for, although a youth, he was strong in faith, and under torture evinced such remarkable firmness and intelligence, that all around were amazed. His conduct actually extorted such admiration from the spectators that the governor had to release him.

This persecution was violent at Carthage also, and many contended for the faith under the most painful circumstances. One man, after having witnessed the burning of his wife, was himself badly bruised and stoned, until he was left for dead, when an affectionate daughter, searching for his remains, found him with signs of life. A woman was dragged to the altar by her husband, who compelled her to sacrifice, by holding her hands, but she cried, "I did it not! I did it not!" for which she was banished. Many were

cast into prison, and tortured for days together in various ways, but stood firm to their belief and looked at death unmoved. Some of the bishops fled, for the punishment of death was especially decreed against them. But the most painful consequences followed the abjurations of those who were only nominally Christians; for they produced the effect of encouraging the authorities to believe, that they could succeed in their desire entirely to extirpate the profession of Christianity.

But through the providence of God, the mind of Decius was diverted from these efforts, upon defenceless Christians, to armed forces in rebellion against his authority; for a resistance to his authority had broken out in Macedonia; and the Gothic war called him away. Together with these circumstances, Decius soon lost his life, and for nearly a year the church had an opportunity to recruit. Under Gallus and Volusianus, A. D. 252, Christians were permitted to conduct their worship without any special molestation; but in the following year the pestilence, which had commenced under the former government, increased with alarming violence, spreading over every part of the Roman Empire; and as usual, it was attributed to Christians. Persecutions were now revived with great fury,\* and many fell victims to the fanatical rage of the populace.

As the persecution progressed, the ministry was employed in strengthening and encouraging believers.

\* Cyprian's Defence of Christians.



Cyprian wrote to the church of the Thibaritans, in North Africa, a most affectionate letter, exhorting them to steadfastness and encouraging their faith and hope.

In Rome, the bishop, Cornelius, was banished and afterwards put to death ; and Lucian, who courageously succeeded him in office, shared a similar fate.

After the murder of Gallus, Valerianus succeeded to the throne, and for some time showed a disposition to be favorable to the Christians, but it was not long before he became a persecutor. The impression became common at this time, that if the bishops and teachers of the church could be moved out of the way, the Christians could be broken up and destroyed. Cyprian was brought before the proconsul Paternus, who said to him, "The emperors, Valerianus and Gallienus, have sent me a rescript, in which they command that all those who do not observe the Roman religion, shall now take upon them the Roman ceremonies. I therefore ask what are you ? what do you answer ?" Cyprian replied, "I am a Christian and a bishop ; I know no God but the true God, who created heaven and earth, and sea, and all that is in them. This God we Christians serve : to this God we pray day and night for ourselves ; for all mankind, and for the prosperity of the emperor himself." The proconsul asked, "Is this then your fixed resolution ?" He replied, "A good resolution, which proceeds from the knowledge of God, can never change." He was, therefore, banished, as the edict

directed. The proconsul asked him who the presbyters were who resided in the city, for the edict related only to the ministers: to which Cyprian replied, "Your laws have justly condemned informers; I cannot, therefore, give them up."

It was the custom of Christians, in these days, to assemble at the grave of the martyrs, on the anniversary of their martyrdom, to hear a sermon or exhortation, and the edict now published, forbid the assemblages of this and every other description; but the Christians forsook not the assembling themselves, and many were banished, imprisoned, and caused to labor in the mines for their firmness. These attempts to break up the connection of the ministers from the members of the church, did not, however, succeed; for when they could not preach to their people, they wrote to them, and a constant communication was kept up, by which they encouraged and instructed their scattered and persecuted flocks. Valerianus, finding these measures ineffectual, resolved upon greater severity, and, in the year 258, issued an edict the more effectually to prevent the spread of Christianity among the higher classes, and deprive the people of their clergy. The first who felt its force was bishop Sextus, and four deacons of Rome, who suffered a cruel and painful death.

During the angry controversies, which Cyprian and his peculiar doctrines had been the cause, Carthage was visited with one of the most desolating scourges which it had ever known. The dead were laying

about the streets, and filled the highways of the city; while there were few who could be induced to remove them, or perform the duties of their interment. Controversies now gave place to a general concern, and Christians turned their attention to the duties which religion points out under such circumstances. The church assembled, and determined to seek out the sick, and administer to them, and endeavor to bury the dead that filled the city. Such conduct drew forth expressions of admiration from the persecutors of the church, and suspended the cruelties which they had practised towards them.

Cyprian was recalled from banishment by the new governor of the province, and kept himself at a small country place near Carthage, until he learned that he was to be brought before the governor to hear his sentence, under directions which were expected from Rome. When the news came, he appeared, and received the sentence of death, as *Inimicus Diis Romanis et sacris legibus*. The last thing that fell from his lips was, "God be thanked," and he was numbered among the martyrs.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

**Scantiness of Direction in the Scriptures—The Monarchical and Democratic Principles—Different Modes in Different Countries—Existing Forms Preserved—Synagogue Forms made Christian—Conformable with Civil Regulations—Clement of Rome on the Earliest Forms of Church Government—Episcopacy, What?—Practices of the Church—Opinions of Cyprian—Original Relation of Presbyters to the Church—The Order Observed in Deliberative Assemblies—Deacons, their Duties—The Mode of Appointing Officers—College of Twelve Presbyters at Alexandria—Polycarp's Description of the Pastor's Work—The Exchange of Internal Church Unity for the External—Tertullian on the Rights of the Laity—Origen Taught in Churches—The Extremes—The Participation of the Laity—Elders—Separation of the Clergy from the Laity.**

THE scantiness and incompleteness, in the detail of the sacred writings, in reference to the formation and regulation of Christian communities, leaves the irresistible inference, that it was not designed that there should be any one mode for all circumstances of the church, in all future time. If it were the purpose of the great head of the church, to confine Christian communities to any particular mode, a regular detail would have been left, with strict injunction, as in the case of the Levitical law ; where precise directions, and minute descriptions are given, for the

regulation and government of the Jews. But we find scanty and slight mention of some regulations, without any direction in reference to others; and little in regard to the Christian ministry. It is true, there is direction in reference to the manner of choosing, and ordaining ministers, approving deacons, admitting widows; and such regulations as are necessary for the health and growth of the church. But the custom was to appropriate to the church, the use of existing forms, when those forms suited the great objects contemplated by the gospel. The spirit of Christianity pointed to feelings of a common and mutual character, the blessing of common deliberation, a mutual interchange of experience and opinions; as well as prayer in common. And its spirit pointed to the modes most congenial, and, under the circumstances, best calculated to advance its principles. It is very certain that the spirit of the ancient church, would not lead to the adoption of the *monarchical principle*, it was not suited to its spirit and essence; and the *democratic* certainly obtained during the time that intervened from the apostolic age to that of Cyprian, and the voice of the people was necessary to confirm or appoint for more than a century; but the foundations of monarchical episcopacy were laid broad and deep during the controversy in Carthage and Rome, and its results have been felt up to this day.

From what can be gathered, however, from early Christian history, we must conclude that different modes of church government prevailed in different

countries ; in the same age, indeed, from the national sentiments and civil regulations of different countries, we see that what would be repugnant to one nation, might be the prevailing characteristic of another. In a comparison of different churches, and the character of different fathers ; we learn that the despotic inflexibility of a few, was neither the sentiment, nor temper of the many, but that these sentiments existed and were practised notwithstanding.

The etymological import, or the specific sense of the appellative of office ; with duties and established customs, go to show that *existing* forms were preferred if they suited the genius of Christianity, but if not, they were changed. When the apostles entered a city, for instance, in which there was a Jewish synagogue, they went there first of all, to deliver their message to the Jews and devout Gentiles ; to the men of Israel and those that feared God ; expressly declaring that it was necessary that they should be the first to hear God's word. Here an existing congregation was frequently induced to put on Christianity, and were made Christian without abolishing any of the modes of worship, except such as conflicted with the pure doctrines of faith. Even the same word, which is frequently found in the books of Moses, for congregation, is found to correspond in the Septuagint with *ecclesia*, which is rendered *church*, properly meaning *circle* or *assembly*.

The officers, laws, and customs of the church, are found in the New Testament language, as well as

that of the fathers, to correspond with synagogue terms. The affairs of a synagogue were conducted by a council of *elderly men*, called *πρεσβυτεροι*; one of whom was alternately the *chazan*; or overseer, from whence is derived the term *ἐπισκοπος*, *episcopus*; and from *Parnasin* is derived the term *deacon*. These terms came from this source, and were transferred to the Christian church. Wherever churches were established in the Roman empire, this form could not have been obnoxious, as the affairs of towns were carried on by an assembly of *decuriones*. *Ordo* was a word appropriated to this rank of officers—*ordo senatorum*—which shows the comparison between the ecclesiastical polity and civil administration, for the spiritual rulers were afterward designated by that appellation.

The *chazan*, or bishop of the congregation, bore that appellation because he selected the person to read in the congregation, stood by *overseeing* the reader, correcting him when he was wrong, overseeing the services, conducting the public prayers, and preaching the word. The term *episcopus*, in the church, was understood as synonymous with that of *presbyter*, and all the fathers show that it was so regarded, until the monarchical spirit gained the ascendancy. Clement of Rome, in his epistle to the Corinthians, gives, throughout that important document, a simple relation of the earliest forms of church government, and bishops and presbyters are put upon equal-

ity, as in the following :\* “And the preaching through countries and cities, the apostles appointed the first fruits (of their conversions) to be bishops and ministers over such as should afterwards believe, having first proved them by the spirit. Nor was this any new thing : seeing that long before it was written concerning *bishops* and *deacons*. For thus, saith the scriptures, in a certain place, ‘I will appoint their *overseers* in righteousness, and their *ministers* in faith.’” Here the terms are convertible, and so they must have been originally regarded. Irenæus makes the *presbyter* the same as *bishop*, when he says : “Those presbyters in the church are to be obeyed, who have the *succession*, as we have shown from the apostles ; who, with the succession of *their Episcopacy*, have the sure gift of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father.” So that *presbyter*, and *bishop* or *episcopus*, are convertible terms, applicable alike to one order of ministers.

The practices of the church go also to show that such was the case. When the church at Smyrna had lost their bishop, Bucolus, Polycarp was a *deacon*, and catechist in the church ; he had served in that capacity up to the hour of his election, to supply the vacancy thus occasioned. Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage, in whose time and with whom mainly the controversy arose for the ascendancy of episcopal power and exclusiveness, calls himself, when not filled with the rage of controversy, a *presbyter*. “As for

\* Sec. 42.



that," says he, "which my brother *presbyters* (compresbyteros) Donatus and Fortunatus, Novatus and Gordeus, have written to me, I have been able to answer nothing alone ; since I have determined from the beginning of my *episcopate*, to do nothing by my private judgment without consulting you, and without the consent of the people ;" and, remarkable to tell, this same writer complains himself of the authority which bishops arrogate to themselves, in terms sufficiently forcible to show how this office gradually grew in power and importance, before the pleasing theme had dared to be boldly advanced ; he says, "And his bishop now placed over them, arrogates to himself the sole authority with an unprecedented impudence."\*

The original relation of presbyters to the church was to rule and guide its affairs, in conjunction with the church assembled together, as the servants and not the masters of the flock ; and they formed a deliberative assembly as Tertullian says,† "There preside over us certain approved *elders*, who have obtained that honor, not by purchase, but by public testimony ; for no office of God is to be bought with money." They preside as *primi inter pares* ; and it is most likely that in some churches the duty of presiding was conferred by turns, as well as in others, by suffrage.

The order observed in the deliberative assemblies of the church, was as follows, viz. the presbyters sat in a semi-circle *in chairs*, the middle one of which was

\* Apology, c. 39. † Epistle ix.

elevated for the presiding presbyter, while the deacons stood between these presbyters and the congregation, or outside these chairs ; hence, Tertullian, in allusion to this custom, in his *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, makes use of the expression, in reference to apostolic churches, "over whom the apostolic chairs still preside ;" and Jerome, on the same subject, most emphatically says, that "the church was governed by a common council of the presbyters." If, then, the fathers can be relied upon for a correct representation of the church in these times, the plain inference is, that the bishops were but *primus presbyters*, and that *presbyters* governed the church as the *successors* of the apostles.

The business of *deacons* was, at the earliest periods, external only ; the office was instituted to take care of, and assist in the administration of alms,\* and to look after the sick members of the church. Females were also appointed to take part in these duties as St. Paul speaks of Phœbe, a servant (*diakonos*) of the church, which is at Cenchrea."† But these females were also styled widows ; Ignatius, in the close of his epistle to the Smyrnians, says, "I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and the virgins that are called widows." As they were not all virgins, but mostly selected from among the widows. The appointment of virgins seems to have been an innovation, for Tertullian inveighs in strong terms against the abuse of introducing females under age into the office of deaconesses.

\* Acts, 6 c.      † Rom. xvi, 1.

The appointment of officers was by various modes, as on some occasions the church was allowed to make the selection, while on others it was made as by the apostles ; who selected and empowered others to do so, as in the case of Titus. Clement, of Rome, gives directions on this subject in the following language : "They should be possessed, after the judgment of approved men, with the *consent* of the whole church ;" while Jerome says,\* particularly in relation to bishops, that it was the custom of the Alexandrian church up to the time of the bishops Haraclius and Dionysius, in the middle of the third century, that the presbyters chose one of their number for their president, and called him bishop : and Eutychus who was patriarch of Alexandria in the first half of the tenth century, says, that in the Alexandrian church, in the beginning of the fourth century, there still existed an arrangement by which a college of twelve presbyters selected one from their midst, and ordained him bishop, supplying the vacancy by election from among the presbyters, to keep up the number of presbyters.

At first the duties of a pastor were simple, and easily defined. Polycarp describes them in terms sufficiently forcible, "Let not the widows be neglected ; be thou after God their guardian : let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent : neither do thou any thing but according to the will of God, as also thou dost with all constancy. Let your assemblies be more full ; inquire into all by name ;

\* Ad Evangel. 146.

overlook not the men-servants and maid-servants; neither let them be puffed up, but rather let them be more subjected to the glory of God, that they may obtain a better liberty." What a contrast is presented, when from the simplicity and duties of the ministry, bishops step to the control of their *compresbyters*, and become monarchical rulers; here is where the *internal* church unity ceases, and an *external* unity becomes necessary to maintain and keep alive a church hierarchy. When the original motives which called forth the pastor of a flock have fled, some substitution is necessary, and the consoling and elevating truths of the gospel are merged into forms, to which are attributed unutterable value and mysterious efficacy;—shadows are substituted for realities, and the offering of Christ becomes unnecessary. The times of superstition and ignorance favor the corruptions of the church, and claims of priority and exclusiveness, with imposing forms, wield remarkable power over men's consciences.

Tertullian lived at a time when the most powerful opposition prevailed on the part of the laity to the encroachments of the hierarchy; and although he seems to favor the exclusiveness of the church priesthood, which now strengthened itself upon every occasion, and the divine right of bishops, which views now began to obtain, yet his admissions in this controversy upon the manner in which *divine right* and *human order* should be regarded, set forth what were the primitive usages; while the origin of all the ar-

guments for exclusiveness and legitimacy, is shown in a light that does not warrant their existence; he says, "As far as the thing itself is concerned, *the laity have the right to administer the sacraments*, and to teach in the churches. The word of God and the sacraments were communicated by God's grace to all Christians, as instruments of God's grace. But the inquiry here is not merely what is lawful in general, but also, what is convenient under existing circumstances. We must here apply the declaration of St. Paul, 'all things which are lawful are not convenient.' With a view, therefore, to the maintenance of order, which is necessary in the church, the laity should make use of their priestly rights as to the administration of the sacraments, only when time and circumstances require it."\* It is a well known fact, that laymen taught in the churches. Several bishops allowed Origen to preach in their churches, and when a bishop of Alexandria, of hierarchical principles, reproved them for such irregularities, they replied that it was the custom of eastern bishops to require the laity to preach when they were found capable.† There are two extremes which parties assumed in this controversy, the one is the subversion of all order, while the other is, that the order of ministers, possessed a magical sanctity, communicated on account of their order, independently of their personal fitness or holiness; and that by the *opus operatum* of their outward duties alone, they could call down and spread

\* De Bapti. 1 c. 81.      † Eusebius vi, 19.

around them the divine favor, as supernatural mediators and priests.

It was a custom long adhered to, even by the clergy of the hierarchical party, that the consent of the laity was asked to the election of an officer, and no selection was ratified without such consent. This is clearly set forth by Cyprian in his account of these matters; he says,\* "We are accustomed to call you together to consult previously to the consecration of spiritual officers, and to weigh the characters and merits of all, in a general consultation." He attributes to the laity the same rights in relation to bishops, and deduces it from apostolic tradition, that the bishop could not be selected but in the presence of the congregation, who had the right to reject.† The participation of the laity, and their influence in the management of its concerns, may likewise be gathered from an old arrangement, which had an existence in the North African church as late as the beginning of the fourth century. By this arrangement, a class of lay officers or leaders existed, by the name of *seniores plebis*. These were not the clergy, but formed a middle station, between them and the laity. They were called together by the clergy for consultation, and when complaints were made by the congregation, against the clergy, these were their representatives. There is a commentary by Hilary, on the epistles of St. Paul, written in the fourth century; in which upon the text, 1 Tim. v, 1, he has the following, "Among all peo-

\* Epistle, 88. † Cyprian to the church of Leon and Astorga.

ple age is honored, and hence the *synagogues*, and afterwards the church had elders, without whose council, nothing was undertaken in the church. As the text here commented upon, has nothing to favor the impression that presbyters are understood, we must conclude that *seniores* are distinguished by the age of the person, and not by a particular office.

The churches were frequently thrown into trying and difficult circumstances, persecution and oppression often came to disturb their peace, and break up the order and regularity of their services; hence they were frequently in positions which called forth the energetic conduct of a leading minister at the head of affairs. This, by degrees, led to the increase of episcopal authority. They passed by the force of such circumstances, from a fellow presbyter to the entire control, and separated the clergy and the laity. It gave to the bishops the power of selecting church officers; and from a small beginning, at first temporary, the laity were stripped of their rights; officers were created, orders of clergy established, and the iron foot of oppression now trod upon the sacred enclosure of Christian liberty. Then followed the doctrines which put out of view the real character of the sacraments, and other observances of the church in primitive days; for, when the clergy became removed from the laity by an improper distinction, the duties of a minister to teach and to enforce the true and evangelical doctrines of the gospel were substituted by forms, which conferred the true grace of God, when performed by a PRIEST.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ORIGIN OF COUNCILS.

**The Natural Dependence of Churches—Advantages of that Dependence—The Catholic Spirit Perverted—The Metropolis—The Ecclesia Apostolica—How other Cities became Dependent upon Rome—The False Notion of Superiority—The Autographs of the Sacred Writings—Their Influence—Origin of Provincial Synods—The Custom of Issuing Edicts—How Councils Grew Up—Originated in Greece—Laity and Inferior Clergy have no Constitutional Rights in Councils—The Rights of Country Bishops—Scenes in Councils.**

**CHURCHES** grew up independently, but there was a natural relationship subsisting between the newly formed congregation and the one which cared for their souls, and provided them with the word of life. This connection was a natural consequence, and created a combination between the clergy and laity of the two churches. The union of effort, and the Christian enterprise which marked the earliest ages of the church, continued to multiply these congregations, until they magnified the importance of the work, and questions of vital import required a mutual interchange and internal organization of the clergy. This had its advantages, but resulted in tyrannical rule.

One great advantage which this dependence and



organization had, was the suggestion of an interchange of services; for it was soon discovered that the talents of a single mind, although greatly gifted, could not successfully forward the work of God year after year: and, as an able writer has justly said, "To leave a congregation submerged in the stagnant pool of a single mind, for half a century, can never consist with its progress in knowledge, or with its vitality." This, however, was incidental, but it favored the graspings for power, by introducing a control of the clergy; and while nothing could avert some species of hierarchical subordination, the dangerous tendency was the great extreme to which it might lead.

Another favorable result of the primitive combinations of districts and sections, was the destruction of a too natural tendency to jealousy and opposition, which invariably grew out of the contiguity of independent congregations—a result more particularly seen, after the reaction from the arrogant pretensions of Cyprian and other like spirits of his time.

The lively catholic spirit of the church was singularly productive of a great perversion; at first it was inward, and the outward was a natural consequence; the love and peace of each individual member formed an outward bond—they ate one loaf, formed one communion, and their fellowship was undisturbed by any error of doctrine or church polity, so long as the important features of their profession were adhered to; this was the *catholicism* of the church. But a vain notion of superiority and the exercise of a wicked

power broke it down and rent the seamless garment of Jesus Christ !

The spread of Christianity was from the principal cities and towns, beginning most generally with the metropolis (μετροπολις) of a province which stood at the head of the church ; the metropolis was, therefore, more experienced, and, as in the civil so with the ecclesiastical, assumed to give direction in church affairs. This made the metropolitan bishops *primus inter pares*, to a considerable extent, when local causes did not interfere. The principal places too, where the apostles had founded churches or taught in person, were supposed to have received the truth from a source, and under circumstances that entitled them to peculiar respect, and gave them the title of *ecclesia apostolica*, so that whenever any doubt existed in relation to points of doctrine or discipline, it was generally determined according to the manner in which the *ecclesia apostolica* regarded it.

It is very natural, therefore, to see how Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria and Corinth, became dependent upon Rome. Rome was the great metropolis of the world, the two great apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul had taught there and were there put to death. It was the great reservoir of knowledge, and the centre of power, from whence both went forth to the very ends of the earth. Besides these outward circumstances, there was a false notion of superiority which always lived in Rome, and governed all its affairs. Irenæus frequently appeals to these churches under

the title of "ecclesia apostolica;" and in one place particularly, to the *ecclesia apostolica in Rome* as the greatest and oldest in the world, where Christians met from all quarters, and where the doctrines delivered from the apostles would most likely be maintained.

But as he has been long claimed as the earliest and strongest advocate of the primacy of Rome, it may be well to observe that he says, "To the Roman church, on account of its more potent principality, it is necessary that every church should resort; that is to say, those of the faithful who dwell on every side of it. For in it, by those who are on every side of it, is thus preserved the tradition which hath descended from the apostles."\* This, however, is not inculcating the doctrine of the absolute necessity of a universal submission to Rome, the circumjacent churches are directed to Rome for the purpose of ascertaining the truth, because there, *the autographs*, of which they had only the copy, of St. Paul's epistle to that church, and St. Peter's first epistle, were to be found. Tertullian directs a resort to other metropolitan churches, in common with Rome, when he says, "Still the very chairs of the apostles remain in their own places: still are the *authentic letters* recited, which sound forth their very tones, and which faithfully exhibit their very countenances. If thou art in Achaia, thou hast Corinth: if, in Macedon, thou hast Philippi and Thessalonica. If thou journeyest into Asia, thou hast Ephesus: if Italy be thy residence,

\* Iren. adv. Hær. lib. c. 3.

thou hast Rome,"\* The expression in the original in this passage, *ipsæ authenticæ līteræ*, evidently refers to the *autographs* of the apostolic epistles. He sends the inquirer from churches that have sprung up around the cities from which they originated, to the place where the original letters were kept, that he may be correctly informed as to doctrine, or the reading of any particular text. Hence those in Macedon, are sent to Philippi and Thessalonica; those in Italy, to Rome; those in Achaia, to Corinth, and those in Proconsular Asia, to Ephesus; and not all these to Rome.

Controversies of moment, however, were, at a very early period, referred to an assemblage of deputies from the churches in the province, where those controversies happened to occur; or where the questions mooted became important from any cause—this originated *provincial synods*. These assemblies were at first regarded as innovations, and violent opposition to them existed for a long time. There were not, at first, regularly appointed seasons for the sessions of these bodies, but they were called together as circumstances required. In the middle of the third century, however, we find the existence of annual synods in many of the provinces, and the authority of their decisions acknowledged. But the bishops of Rome assumed, that a peculiarly decisive authority was due to them; and that they were, in a preeminent de-

\* Tertul. de Præscript. adv. Hær. c. xlv.

gree, to have the decision of matters over all others, as the source of the true apostolical tradition. As early as 190, this arrogant assumption exhibited itself, when Victor, then bishop of Rome, excommunicated all the churches of Asia Minor, because they did not agree with Rome in the celebrated Easter controversy.

Next came the custom of issuing peremptory edicts in ecclesiastical matters, by which Rome endeavored to make the impression that it was to be regarded as *episcopi episcoporum*, as assumption which has filled a large space in the history of the Christian world.

The origin of these assemblies of church deputies, grew out of the necessity of referring controversies of every character to the decision of men deputed to consult upon the points in dispute, and decide between parties. In the latter end of the second century, when the church was agitated by the Easter controversy, all differences were attempted to be reconciled in this way. Such was also the case in relation to the Montanistic prophets; but they were not regular assemblies, and only called at such times as circumstances seemed to require. It was about the beginning of the third century that a regular annual synod presented to us a permanent arrangement of the confederation of churches, and imitated the Amphictyonic councils of Greece—the country where annual synods were first adopted in the church. These synods being first called by a bishop, who asked the neighboring bishops to come together to assist

him in reference to the doubts or difficulties which arose in his charge, grew to stated assemblies ; and their growth and authority were no doubt increased, by their favoring the irresponsible authority of some bishops of the church.

If we can rely upon Cyprian, in the council at Carthage, A. D. 256, it was boldly affirmed, that the laity had no constitutional rights in these assemblies. The entire independence of bishops, one of another, was there clearly set forth ; and the rights of the inferior clergy were also placed out of the question. The spirit of the high church party, however, moved with greater activity among these eighty bishops than it had ever done before, notwithstanding the dangers and relentless persecutions which surrounded them. The same exclusion is observed in other episcopal conventions of Antioch, Neo-Cæsarea, and Ancyra, and one of the canons enacted in the synod of the latter, goes to show how greatly the breach can be widened, when power is once assumed by irresponsible men. In that assembly they excluded bishops from their rights, *because they happened to have their fields of labor in the country*, and drew a distinction between bishops of cities and those of the country. They enacted that, "It is not permitted to chorepiscopi (*χωρεπίσκοποι*, country bishops,) to ordain presbyters or deacons ; nor, indeed, to the presbyters of cities to do so, without a license from their bishop to that effect."

When a bishop was unable to influence the con-

vention by his own powers of persuasion, or intrigues, he frequently employed some able and learned layman to address the assembly. And we often find the learned Origen standing before a synod to impress it with his peculiar opinion, or to advocate the opinions of some one of the bishops. Such were the scenes of strife and learned wrangling which characterised these councils at times, that, it is said, in one of them a simple-hearted layman arose in the midst of the assembled prelates, and exclaimed, "Christ and his apostles did not deliver to us dialectic and delusive subtilities, but *εὐαγγέλιον* to be kept in its purity by faith and good works."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DISCIPLINE—SACRAMENTS.

Auditores, What?—Time of Probation—Two Classes of Auditores—The Instructions Preparatory to the Eucharist—Baptismal Preparations—Baptism, What Considered—Baptism, how Allied to Regeneration—Controversy upon the Subject of Baptism—Baptism of the Spirit—The Laying On of Hands—Sacrament of Confirmation—Sponsors—Anointing with Oil—Priestly Functions Confer the Holy Ghost—Altars, What?—Oblations—The Lord's Supper, How Kept—Offering, How Regarded—Views of the Eucharist Changed—Mixture of the Cup.

It was the object of those who had the care of souls, first to multiply and extend the number as rapidly as possible; but experience soon taught them the necessity of paying special attention to the condition of those who should be admitted into the church as members. They were, therefore, placed under proper training and careful instruction, and not admitted to full privileges until they had passed a regular trial, and pronounced qualified. This class of persons was called *auditores*, which implied their relation, as they were considered only in a state to listen to the holy scriptures, and the sermons which were delivered. The time of this probation was not fixed, but varied



according to the condition of the probationer, until the council of Elvira took the matter into consideration, and placed it at two years. According to Origen, there were two classes of these catechumens; the first were those who were for the first time receiving private instruction, and the other, those who were admitted to the assemblies, and were preparing for baptism. The duty of examining and instructing these *auditores*, in some of the churches, devolved upon the most distinguished reader of the scriptures in the congregation, which was the case at Carthage; but at Alexandria, where men of learning frequently became probationers, it was found necessary to appoint some one of Grecian and Roman learning, who was likewise well acquainted with the doctrines of the Christian religion, that they might remove the numerous doubts and objections of heathenism. This formed the foundation of the celebrated school of Alexandria. Great care was observed in reference to those who were admitted to the eucharist; and a strict examination was had of every one who joined in this solemn ordinance of the church. The catechumen who was about to receive the ordinance of baptism, was required to repeat a confession of faith, which was so prepared as to express the essential doctrines of Christianity, and in many instances so enlarged as to oppose Jews, heathens and heretics! These confessions of faith were soon regarded as the work of the apostles themselves, or that they were such as were taught by them, and collected together

as the united work of them all. The confession was called *συμβολον*, *symbolum*, which was either intended to express the *sign* of faith, or was used in reference to a proverbial watchword, given to those who were admitted to the service of Christ, the *tessera militaris*. There were, however, a variety of significations to the use of this term, and the Alexandrians, who were fond of analogies, changed its original meaning altogether. Many, who were impressed with the truths of Christianity, at first had the confession of faith placed in their hands for their study and belief; to which custom Clement alludes, when he says, "The first saving change from heathenism, is faith, and faith is a short confession of the most urgent truths of religion. On this foundation knowledge is built, which is a settled conviction of the truths received through faith, by demonstrations taken from the scriptures."

Baptism was considered the act by which the catechumen was about to pass from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, the confession in this solemn service, was repeated in reply to the interrogatories propounded by the bishop, to whom he gave his hand and pledged himself to renounce the pomps and shows, the games and wickedness of the world, as well as his gods, (angels,) which had seduced him: this was the Christian soldier's oath, the *sacramentum militiæ Christianæ*, by which he considered himself bound to the warfare, as the *miles Dei et Christi*. Justin Martyr, in speaking upon this

subject, shows how closely allied baptism and regeneration were in point of time in the practice of the early church, and how the catechumen was taught to receive the latter by an act of faith, while the former was administered by the church. The early teachers endeavored to keep up the practice of the apostles in this respect, and by a course of teaching sought to prepare the probationer for the reception of the Holy Ghost at baptism. Justin Martyr must be thus understood when he says, "We will state also in what manner we are created anew by Christ, and have dedicated ourselves to God; that we may not, by omitting this, appear to dissemble any thing in our explanation. As many are persuaded and believe that the things which we teach and declare are true, and promise that they are determined to live accordingly, are taught to pray, and to beseech God with fasting, to grant them remission of their past sins, while we also pray and fast with them. We then lead them to a place where there is water, and there they are regenerated in the same manner as we also were; for they are then washed in that water, in the name of God, the Father, and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,' and that it is impossible that those who are once born should again enter into their mother's womb, is evident to all. Moreover, it is declared by the prophet Isaiah, as we have before written, in what manner

they who have sinned and repent may escape the punishment of their sins. For thus, it is said, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil from your souls; learn to do well, do justice to the fatherless and avenge the widow: and come and let us reason together, saith the Lord." The same caution in expression that is necessary now, was not known among the fathers; as bishop Jewell\* has very justly observed, "the old learned fathers delighted in terms of the Old Law, notwithstanding the observation and ceremony thereof were then abolished;" and it was not until the schools began to moot a thousand questions which engendered strife and division, that caution became necessary to avoid favoring heretical doctrines by unguarded expressions.

There is but little information in relation to the subject of baptism, until the controversy occurred, which took place in the second century. Up to that time, both infants and adults were admitted to the ordinance. Irenæus is the first who wrote expressly upon this subject, and insists upon *infant* baptism; when he says, "Jesus Christ came to redeem all by himself; all, I say, who are born again unto God through him: infants, children, boys, youths, and the old. Therefore, he passed through every age, and became an infant to infants, he became a child among children to sanctify those of this age." And in farther proof that this argument applies to the baptism of infants, Tertullian opposed Irenæus in the latter part of

\* Reply to Harding, art. 17.

the second century, when he became an opponent of infant baptism, and wrote upon that subject. Tertullian took that position from the supposed importance of the rite to the adult, and the preparation necessary for it in the catechumens of the church. In allusion to Matt. ix, 14, he says, "Let them come while they are growing up, let them come while they are learning, while they are being taught whither it is they come ; let them become Christians after they have an opportunity of knowing Christ. Why does the age of innocence hasten the forgiveness of sins ?" He appears to suppose that there is no efficacy in baptism, without a conscious participation of the person baptized by his own individual faith ; and as there was no danger of the salvation of infants, he thought it best to reserve the rite for the advantage of the adult. But Cyprian, who was a great admirer of Tertullian in other respects, opposes him in this ; for in the North African church, this subject now began to assume the most serious form of controversy. Among other questions, Fidus started one, in reference to the exact time when an infant should be baptized, namely, "Whether a child should be baptized immediately after it was born, or eight days after its birth, as in the case of Jewish circumcision ?" This matter was discussed in the council of Carthage, A. D. 252 ; when Cyprian opposed the opinions of Fidus, who was a member of the council, in the following language : "None of us could agree to your opinion ; but we all determined that the grace of God

is not to be refused to any human being, as soon as he is born. . . . For as God accepts not persons, so neither does he ages ; since he shows himself a father to all for the attainment of heavenly grace with well poised equality. . . . Though the child is just born, yet there is no reason even then that any one should shrink from kissing it,\* to bestow upon it the grace of God, and give it the salutation of peace. . . . But if the greatest sinners and those who beforehand have sinned greatly against God, receive remission for their sins after they come to believe, and no one prohibits them from receiving baptism and grace, how much rather ought the infant not to be forbidden, which being newly born, cannot have sinned, except in as far as being born of Adam according to the flesh." Origen, in the fifth book of his commentary on the epistle to the Romans, most expressly declares, that it is an apostolic tradition—a custom that came down to them from the days of the apostles, to baptize infants.

In apostolic days, under the remarkable ministry of inspired men, it was invariably the case that the baptism of the spirit accompanied the rite of baptism. It was evidently their care to see that those brought into church fellowship, should enjoy the gift of the spirit ; for when St. Peter and St. John came to Samaria to look after the spiritual state of Philip's converts, they found them destitute of that gift, and bestowed it upon them.

\*A part of the ceremony of baptism was a kiss, as the sign of the communion of peace.

The laying on of hands and prayer, and the consequent baptism of the spirit, were in conformity to the custom which belonged to apostles, and the church under their guidance and direction ; and, of course, referable to those times only. Notwithstanding, as early as the close of the second century, when monarchical episcopal views were cherished, a notion was formed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was dependent upon the *imposition of hands* by a bishop. Tertullian considered baptism as only preparatory to this, and a part of the rite of baptism as necessarily belonging to it. He places all these things together, which were afterwards separated, and which now forms the *sacrament of confirmation*\* in the Romish church, viz. the anointing with oil, as the consecration of the soul ; the sign of the cross as a preventive of evil ; and the laying on of hands as bringing with it the *illuminatio spiritus*.

The error of supposing that Philip was not capable of conferring a true and proper baptism ; or at least a baptism accompanied by the spirit, because he was a deacon, was entertained in the third century ; and in consequence thereof the bishops were made to travel through their dioceses, in order to administer what was afterwards called the *rite of confirmation*, to all who were baptized by their clergy. The custom, therefore, of separating the laying on of hands from the ceremony of baptism, grew out of an impression that, with the ministry proper, there were still to fol-

\* De Carn, c. viii.

low the marks of the powerful energies of apostolic prayer and benediction. But, alas ! it has been painfully experienced that these signs were wanting to the apostles' successors ; and history confirms the truth that they have been confined to apostolic days. This custom in the church was not objectionable until it imported more than was designed ; originally it signified no more than a religious consecration, and the prayer was, that God would bestow upon the ordinance his blessing, and that all that it typified might be fulfilled in the person receiving it.

The custom of *sponsors* had its origin in these days, and grew out of the controversy which occurred when it was attempted to exclude infants from the rite of baptism. That the blessings of a Christian training might be secured to the child, the minister required that some responsible persons should witness the baptism, and pledge themselves for the religious education and training of the child ; and that it might be brought up to a life corresponding to Christian character.

Allied to this was the custom borrowed from the Jewish consecrations of anointing with oil. Cyprian, as well as Tertullian, regards this as a necessary part of the rite of baptism. But Tertullian, although he mentions anointing with oil in his work on baptism,\* yet in his book *De Corona Militis*, although he professes to enumerate the usages which are taken from the traditions of the church, as belonging to baptism,

\* *De Baptismo*, c. 7.



yet he does not make the least allusion to this custom.


When the notion was once fixed, that an exclusively spiritual character belonged to the bishops as successors of the apostles, who had received a kind of magical consecration by ordination, then the right of conferring the Holy Ghost, by means of the priestly functions, obtained as a consequence. The position was, that there was a real virtue in baptism, when administered by a *properly constituted bishop*, and a *real sacrifice* in the Lord's supper offered by God's appointed priest. All the ideas of a sacrifice of the Lord's Supper were originally of a symbolical character, as we shall presently show. But one error naturally leads to another, and to maintain his views in relation to the priestly character of his office, Cyprian was led to the error of a sacrificial worship performed by the priest, which gave to the church the idea of an indispensable unity and the magical efficacy of its forms.

When Celsus and others charged Christians with having no altars, no temples, no images, it was not urged that such charges were unfounded, but they justified the fact, as in some instances we have seen. Yet the place of worship was arranged with an elevated seat for the reading of the scriptures, and a table for the distribution of the elements of the Lord's Supper, which Tertullian calls an *altar*—(*altare*.) This was, no doubt, on account of the custom of placing certain offerings upon the communion table; and

also that the Lord's day collections were placed there until the service was ended. In reference to these offerings, Justin Martyr and Irenæus both speak : the latter says, "The Lord himself commanded his disciples to offer to God the first fruits of his creatures, not as if he needed them, but that they themselves might be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful. He took that which by its nature was bread, and gave thanks, saying, this is my body. In like manner, also, he declared that which by its present created nature is the cup, to be his blood ; and taught them to make a new offering of the New Testament." The term oblation (προσφορά) is frequently used for the offerings thus made. Every one made these offerings according to his ability, as the first fruits of his increase ; and they were applied to the general uses of the church, to the support of the ministry, and of the poor. The common entertainment of love-feast, in which the rich and the poor met together at the same table, was probably furnished from these offerings. It is difficult to determine the time when the term *altar*, as applied to the communion table, arose ; but like many other terms used by the fathers, because of their familiarity with Jews and heathens, it was always employed symbolically. Origen says of Celsus, for instance, that "He sees not that *our altars are the mind of each of the righteous*, from whence are sent up, truly and spiritually, incense offerings of sweet savor, even the prayers that proceed from a pure conscience."

The Lord's Supper was first kept like the Jewish

passover, with a general meal, and formed a part of the service; but in consequence of irregularities, such as those which took place in the Corinthian church, the meal was separated from the Eucharist. This was the *αγάπαι*, or feast of love, in which all classes partook together, in token of their Christian union and fellowship, and was designed to show that all were one in Christ Jesus. Tertullian says, "our supper shows its nature by its name; it is called *agape*, which in Greek means love. Whatever it may cost, it is a gain to be put to cost, in the cause of piety, since we delight all the poor by that refreshment." He also adds, that after supper, each one sang something to the praise of God, as in the passover, and the feast was concluded with prayer. But the bread and the wine to be used in the Eucharist, was brought by the members as an offering, and the praise and prayer of consecration, together with the elements consecrated, were regarded in the light of a *spiritual* sacrifice, Justin Martyr, regarded it so, for, he clearly says, "The prayers and thanksgiving that come from worthy men, are the true sacrifice, well pleasing to God, for *these alone* have Christians learned to make, and particularly in remembrance of their substance, which consists of dry and moist things, by which they are also led to remember the sufferings which Christ underwent for their sakes." And Irenæus, while contrasting this spiritual sacrifice with every kind of sacrificial worship, says, "It is not sacrifices which sanctify the man, but the conscience of him that offers, if



it is pure, sanctifies the offering, and causes God to receive it as from a friend." It was not until the error of a Christian priesthood, in the sense of the term *ipsum*, which is used in the New Testament to describe the Levitical priests, had obtained, that the original and proper views of the Eucharist were changed. As we have seen, the idea of a sacrifice in the supper was originally entirely of a symbolical character, and as a priesthood in the ministry was foreign from the doctrines held by the church, so offerings, save of a spiritual nature, were not allowed among Christians. From the idea of a symbolical sacrifice, opinions entirely at variance sprang up, by which a kind of magical character was given to the elements, so that they were finally held in the light of a real sacrifice.

The custom was to mix the wine for the Eucharist with water. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and others, place this matter beyond dispute. The latter speaks of the cup as consisting of wine mixed with water, and the Saviour, who in his last supper, declared the mixture to be his own blood. Describing the promise of our Lord, that he would drink the fruit of the vine new with his disciples in his Father's kingdom, he uses the expression, "*Hæc enim et Dominus docuit, mixtionem calicis novam in regno cum discipulis habiturum se pollicitus.*" In the third council of Carthage it was decreed that water should be mixed with wine for the Eucharist; and in a prayer book, in the time of Edward the Sixth; which is the first book of com-

mon prayer of the English church, the rubric contains the following direction to the minister in relation to the wine, namely, that he is "to put there to a little pure clean water." So that it was an acknowledged custom, beyond the times of which we write; and had its origin in very ancient usage.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

His Birth and Parentage—His Learning—His Freedom of Inquiry—His Instructors—Pantæus—Clement an Eclectic—Reason for Writing his *Stromata*—His Opinions and Doctrines—Retires from Alexandria—His Travels—Character of the Alexandrian Theology—*πιστις* and *γνωσις*—The Truth Defended—Clement Defends his Doctrines—His Fame—Opposes the North African Theology—His Writings.

**TITUS FLAVIUS CLEMENS** was a convert from heathenism to Christianity. He was born at Athens, about A. D. 150, and was converted near the end of the second century.

None of the fathers merit higher distinction than Clement for extensive erudition, and a general knowledge of philosophy ; and none, probably, was led so far astray from the purity of the Christian faith. He persuaded himself of the truth of Christianity by a freedom of inquiry peculiar to himself: for he studied all the systems of philosophy from the greatest masters of Greece, Italy, Cœlesyria, Egypt, Syria and Palestine, and became an eclectic, without confining himself to any sect of philosophers, and while he conceived that all systems contained much that was

good, he became a Christian from a conviction that in Christianity there was that which shed its rays upon all; or which other systems had only possessed in a very faint degree.

While he was in Egypt seeking the best masters, he found the celebrated Pantæus, who was a Gnostic of great acquirements; and whose acquaintance with the scriptures and knowledge of religion, gave him such a character that he became the first governor of the celebrated Alexandrian theological school.

Antiquity is silent in relation to the origin of Pantæus, but we infer from what Clement says of him, that he was a Sicilian of Jewish extraction, and united Grecian and sacred learning in his instructions. By whom he was instructed in religion, it is equally difficult to determine; some\* say, that he was instructed by those who had seen the apostles, but this must be mere conjecture, as he was too remote from their days to be blessed with any such privilege. He, however, was distinguished at Alexandria on account of his talents, and was placed over the celebrated school of that city.

Alexandria, as we have already remarked, was a prominent place of resort, not only by the surrounding countries, but by distant nations. Arabians, Persians, and the inhabitants of India, were frequently seen among its citizens. Some ambassadors of India were in the city, during the time that Demetrius, was bishop of that city, and hearing of Christianity, they de-

\* Photius, cod. cxviii.

sired some one to be sent to their country, who could preach to them in that region. Pantæus was, therefore, selected and sent to them;\* and the vacancy thus created in the school was filled by Clement, who was at that time one of the pupils of Pantæus.

The stores of Christian learning were pillaged by eclectics, to enrich their system, but Clement, with that freedom of thought, peculiar to his turn of mind, selected for himself such tenets as best agreed with his own judgment, and he endeavored to enrich the Christian religion by transferring the dogmas of the Orientals, Platonists, and Stoics, to its pure and sacred truths. He regarded these dogmas as relics of religions, which originated in divine revelation; and expressly asserts that the philosophy of the Greeks was communicated from heaven to them as their proper covenant, as the law of Moses was to the Hebrews. He assigns the reason for his writing his *Stromata* to be, that much truth is mixed up with ancient philosophy; and although this work is valuable on many accounts, yet as it was written for the catechumens of his school, and came from a theologian of acknowledged learning and piety, his effort to blend heathen tenets with Christian doctrines, rendered it injurious to the Christian cause.

"Among the doctrines of Clement," says an able writer, "are these: that the Logos is the image of the father, and man the image of the Logos; that the Logos proceeded from God, for the purposes of crea-

\* See page 87.



tion ; that the world is produced from God, as a son from a father ; that there are two worlds, the sensible and the intelligible ; that angels are corporeal ; that the Greeks received their wisdom from inferior angels ; that man has two souls, the rational and the irrational ; that the perfection of human nature consists in the contemplation of ideas ; and that the stars are animated by a rational soul." It may be readily seen, by these positions, that he was more of a pagan philosopher than a Christian teacher, yet he is placed among the *patres apostolici*, and his writings classed by many with the word of God !

During the persecution in A. D. 202, under Septimus Severus, he absented himself from Alexandria. During which time, neither his history, nor the place of his abode is known with any certainty. We find him at Jerusalem in the commencement of the reign of Caracalla, to which place he had resorted to become an eye-witness of those scenes of hallowed recollection ; and he sought here to receive light upon some portions of the scriptures. From Jerusalem he went to Antioch, with letters of recommendation from Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem ; who was then a prisoner, for refusing to honor the gods of the heathens. From Jerusalem he visited Antioch, where his talents as a preacher, and his learning as a philosopher, made him celebrated. But he finally returned to his school, where he continued until he died.

The peculiar character of the Alexandrian school may

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be understood from the theory of Clement. There is here discoverable conflicting spiritual dispositions, selected from the speculations of the Gnostics and the Greeks, which he thought Christianity was intended to reconcile and unite together as a higher principle; and which, in itself, was capable of soothing down all contradictions. His gnosis was to proceed from faith, but it engrafted itself upon the Christian faith, which harmonized with it. By this same means, too, he appropriated to himself whatever he thought congenial in any system. It was this principle which made him oppose the unity of the church to the contradictions of the Gnostic schools; for they did not assume different sources of knowledge. The relation of *gnosis* and *πίστις* faith, were similar to the great fountain of knowledge, i. e. the traditions of the main doctrines of the Christian system existing in all churches, and the holy scriptures. He recognised *πίστις* as the source of a *higher life*, and as a common bond for all Christians of every grade of *mind*, by which they formed one divine unity, and *γνῶσις* as a higher knowledge, which proceeded from the same source, but which created the distinctions between faith and a full consciousness of its developments—gnosis being that consciousness. Thus, Clement says, "Faith is necessary for the spiritual life of the Gnostic, as breath is for the animal life."\* He also shows how a deeper knowledge of that which is believed, is obtained by the lucid power of reason, from faith which has pass-

\* *Stromat. lib. ii, 373.*

ed into the interior life, when he says, "Since then, the believers have faith, what higher thing remains for them than the possession of eternal life? But nothing is deficient in faith, which is perfect and self-sufficient in itself." This new power, or perception, proceeding from a life of faith, is described by Clement in the following language, "See, says the Logos, I will make a new thing, which no eye hath seen, and no ear hath heard, and hath not entered into the heart of any man. 1 Cor. ii, 9. Which may be beheld, received, and comprehended with a new eye, with a new ear, with a new heart, by faith and understanding, inasmuch as the disciples of the Lord speak, understand, and act spiritually." Gnosis, with Clement, was not a mere matter of speculation, but an inward living power, produced by faith, and exhibited in the conduct.

This departure from the primitive faith, through an admixture of pagan philosophy, called forth many zealous defenders of the truth, who became assailants of this theological teacher of Alexandria. Some said that the prophets and apostles had no philosophical education; to which Clement replied, "The apostles and prophets spoke certainly as disciples of the spirit, what it inspired them to say; but we cannot reckon on a guidance of the Holy Spirit that stands in the way of all human means of information, in order to unravel the hidden sense of their words. The training of the mind by learning must make us capable of developing the whole intention of the sense commu-

nicated to them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He who wishes to become enlightened in his thoughts by the power of God, must already be accustomed to philosophise on spiritual matters; he must already have attained for himself the proper frame of thought, which may be then illuminated by a higher spirit."

Another party charged him with detracting from revelation, by not allowing it to be the all-sufficient source of truth, and needing the aids of philosophy in order to its sufficiency; and that many could not, therefore, enjoy a knowledge of the revealed will of God. In reply to which, he says, "If we are to make a distinction of those who are always ready to complain, we should call philosophy something which co-operates towards the knowledge of truth: an endeavor after truth—a preparatory training of the Gnostic, and we do not make the co-operating principle the original cause, nor the chief. Not as if the last could not exist without philosophy, for certainly all of us without a general and comprehensive instruction, and without the Hellenic philosophy, and also many, even without being able to read and write, being laid hold of by the divine philosophy, which comes from the barbarians, have received by the power of God through faith, the doctrine concerning the being and attributes of God. The doctrine also concerning our Saviour is perfect in itself and self-sufficing, as the power and wisdom of God; but the Hellenic philosophy which is added to it, does not make the truth more powerful, it only renders inef-

fectual the sophistical attacks against it; and as it wards off delusive machinations against the truth, it is called the proper ward or fence of the vineyard."

Such was his love of learning, and such his profound and varied acquirements, that his fame was unbounded. Alexandria was thronged with persons from all quarters, who sought to converse with him, or place themselves in his school; and among his pupils were some of the most distinguished men of the times.

Clement was an opponent of the North African theology which originated in Tertullian; at least, in view of his Gnostic doctrines, he presents an opposite disposition to the views there entertained. He taught that the ground of all moral development was based upon the operations of divine grace, on the conditions of free-will or self-determination; and insisted upon the practical importance of the moral independence of man in redemption; without ascribing to it a sufficiency that was altogether independent of the reforming power of the grace of God. He asserts that, "when man seeks to free himself from passions by his own discipline, and his own endeavors, he does not succeed. But if he shows a right earnest desire and endeavor after this end, he will attain it by the assistance of God's power, for God communicates his spirit to those souls that desire it. But if they relax from their desire, then also the spirit of God which had been bestowed upon them, withdraws himself." While Tertullian makes the free-will in man subordinate to the spirit of God, Clement makes the

spirit of God operate upon man according to his own free will. The former teaches that there is an innate goodness belonging to man's nature, but the latter teaches the doctrine of depravity, in a sense that man is incapable of possessing any good, but by the spirit of God.

The writings of Clement are numerous, but many of the most important are lost. From the fragments which have come to us, in the writings of the fathers, many have concluded that in his opposition to Montanism, he fell into the error of denying the personality of the Holy Spirit. He intimates, in his *Stromata*, his intention of writing a work, in which he would treat of the nature of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine taught by the Montanists in reference to prophets; and from what we know of the book, through the writings of others, there is no doubt that his opposition to Montanism led him into the above named error.

There is no record of the death of Clement, but it is quite likely that he died at the time of a most fearful persecution, which raged about the beginning of the third century: and probably a witness, with many others, of the truth of religion. This latter opinion is strengthened by the fact that Origen, one of his pupils, succeeded him about this time, when he was only eighteen years of age.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### ORIGEN.

His Birth and Parentage—The Developments of his Mind—His Teachers—Death of his Father—Origen Desires Martyrdom—The care for his Family—Origen Succeeds Clement—The Mode of Maintenance—He becomes a Eunuch—He Travels—Returns to his School—Visits Rome—Returns again and makes a Change in the School—Heraclas becomes his Assistant—His Errors—His Writings—His Doctrines—Brought to an Open Rupture—Jealousy of his Opponents—Causes of the Opposition—Synods against him—Churches Declare in his Favor—His Home and Labors—The first Polyglot—His Character—His Diligence in Collecting MSS.—Journey to Athens—In the Synod of Bastra—Answers Celsus—His Gnosticism and Platonism—Reasonable Soul of Christ—The Effect of his Teachings—Continues his Theological Labors—Controversy about the Soul's Immortality—His Renunciation of Error—His Sufferings and Death.

ORIGEN, the pupil of Clement and his successor in the Alexandrian school, was also called Adamantinus, in consequence of his invincible perseverance and patience in the acquisition of learning and the duties of piety. He was born in Alexandria, of pious parents, and possessed the advantage of a liberal education. In early life he exhibited more than ordinary developments of mind, and a great love for study; and his father being a Christian of wealth and influence, en-



couraged him in the acquisition of knowledge, and taught him the scriptures. But his inquiries soon passed the bounds of his father's ability to gratify, and very early in life he became a pupil in the Alexandrian school.

Although he was here taught philosophy under Clement, as a preparatory study to the Christian religion, yet it was in a way too limited for his desires; he wished to take the entire range of human learning, and acquire all knowledge, and he, therefore, sought another master. At this time there was a celebrated philosophical teacher, by the name of Ammonius, whose school was patronised by Christians, as well as heathens, and Origen joined it, in the hope of obtaining a more extensive acquaintance with philosophy. Ammonius was a man of wild imagination and fanatical spirit, who had framed a new system from the dogmas of Oriental and Grecian philosophy. Porphyry calls him a Christian,\* but charges him with having renounced the faith. This Ammonius endeavored to deny; and he professed to teach Christianity as an essential ingredient of the mighty chaos of opinions which he presented to his pupils. Under this instructor, however, Origen became well acquainted with philosophy, and by his untiring perseverance and ready abilities, mastered all the learning within his grasp.

The persecutions under Septimus Severus, in the tenth year of his reign, were carried on in Alexan-

\* Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 1. vi, c. 19.

dria, with great cruelty. Some of the most prominent citizens were imprisoned, and their estates forfeited to the exchequer. Leonidas, the father of Origen, during this time was seized, and after imprisonment, torture, and the confiscation of his estate, was beheaded. During his imprisonment, Origen, inspired by the spirit which he had so frequently witnessed by the martyrs, desired to join his father, and, with him, seek a martyr's crown. He was sensible of the influence, which the condition of his father's family would have upon his mind, and he feared that it would induce him to retract; he, therefore, wrote to him a most affectionate letter, urging him to perseverance and martyrdom, saying to him, among other things, "Take heed, sir, that for our sakes you do not change your mind." And he resolved to go before Lætus, the governor, and make a confession of his religion; and would have done so, but for the entreaties and stratagems of his mother, who, finding his resolution, not only entreated him with tears not to leave her; but, in order the more effectually to secure her object, hid all his apparel to prevent his leaving her house.

After the martyrdom of Leonidas, his family found many friends—the matrons of the city; especially, ministered to them; and Origen met with a kind reception in the family of a Christian lady of fortune. But he determined to make an effort to support himself and family, without being dependent upon his friends; and he, therefore, although only eighteen

years of age, opened a school for the instruction of youth, in grammatical and philosophical learning. This school soon became celebrated, and was crowded with the youth of both Pagan and Christian families; so that it rewarded his industry and enabled him to acquire considerable property.

During this time Clement died, and Origen was called, by the united voice of the church, to take his place. But as the theological school did not, at this time, allow any salary to its instructor, Origen continued both schools; but having laid the foundation for extensive theological labors, and finding that his attention was too much divided by both schools, he devoted himself entirely to the instruction of theology and gave up all other engagements.

In order to maintain himself in the duties which the church had thus imposed upon him, he sold a valuable collection of old manuscripts, which he had, with great care, collected. This brought him but four oboli per day, for a few years. And although this was a small sum, yet it was sufficient for his maintenance. He adopted a rigid system of morals, and a life of great austerity; and he sought, by precept and example, to inculcate the same upon his pupils. He wore no shoes, nor at any time had more than one coat; and by an erroneous interpretation of some texts of scripture,\* practiced such unusual self-denial, that he became, by his own hands, a eunuch.

His ascetic life, his profound erudition, his philo-

\* Matt. xix, 12.

sophical knowledge, and mode of illustrating and establishing the Christian doctrines, raised his school to great eminence, and he found but little difficulty in spreading his tenets abroad. But in the midst of this prosperity he determined to travel, and we soon find him on a journey through Palestine, Syria, and other countries. In passing through Greece, he visited Athens, and attended the schools of philosophers, and after a profitable investigation of the doctrines which they taught, he resumed his labors at Alexandria, where he raised up many distinguished followers, who did honor to his name by their learning and piety.

But a thirst for his own improvement in learning gave him a great desire to visit Rome. He determined, therefore, upon abandoning his excessive labors in the Alexandrian school, and obtain, in that memorable city, a more intimate acquaintance with men of learning and distinction, both in the church and among philosophers. But it was not long before Demetrius urged his return again to Alexandria, and to the charge of the school—so that after a short stay in Rome, he is again found at his former occupation.

Finding his labors too onerous, he now made a change, dividing the school into two apartments, one for the more inexperienced catechumens, and the other more exclusively for theology. Heraclas, a man of reputation and talents, was appointed over the preparatory department, and Origen had charge of the higher classes. This enabled him to take more time

for the study of sacred learning, and he applied himself more particularly to the Hebrew language ; being assisted in this by Huillus, the Jewish patriarch,\* he soon mastered the language, and made the Jewish scriptures more available to his purposes.

But extensive learning is no safeguard against error, as the theological labors of Origen resulted in opening a door to heresy and delusion. This grew out of the mode which he adopted of interpreting the scriptures. There had long existed a system in Egypt, adopted by the Jews of Alexandria, particularly Philo, of interpreting the writings and traditions of the ancients, by an allegorical mode ; this unfortunately pleased Origen, and he adopted it. But in his teaching, he awakened in his pupils reverence and love for every thing divine in the scriptures ; yet he introduced so much foreign matter into the sacred writings, that he led his hearers away from its proper and simple meaning, instead of conducting them to it. He wrote commentaries on the Psalms, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and on the Gospel of St. John ; besides a work on the Resurrection ; the Stromata, and a treatise on the doctrine of the origin of all being, *περί ἀρχῆς*. It was this last work which exerted such an influence on the fate of Origen, and the school at Alexandria. It set on foot opposite theological dispositions, and created a struggle which brought upon him the ire of many distinguished men.

\* Hierom Apolo. adv. Rufin. lib. 1.

He here mingled together too deeply the Platonic and Christian doctrines, to which he added the wildest speculations. Upon more mature reflection, he retracted many of the opinions which he had here thrown out ; but the principles of his system remained unchanged. He conceived the Deity limited in his operations by the imperfect nature of matter ; that the Deity itself is somewhat material, and of the same nature and substance as the soul of man and angels. That the substances, *ὑποστάσεις*, in the divine nature, are three in number ; and that the Son, the minister of God in creation, emanated from God, and is dependent upon him. He conceived that various regions were made for the different grades of mind, that all evil spirits are confined in a gross corporeity, until they are purged from guilt, and that there is a constant rotation from and to the divine fountain, until a final restoration shall take place, when souls shall be purified and God be *all and in all*. Some of his antagonists very justly traced up his system to the source of Gnosticism, and the Jewish Cabbala. It is strange that with his thorough examination of the sacred scriptures, he should have allowed himself to go so far astray by the dreams of a mystical system of philosophy ; yet he incorporated them with the Christian system, and by so doing, produced very serious consequences to the cause he professed to advocate.

He was now brought into an open rupture with the teachers of the church. Fabius, bishop of Rome, with many others, attacked his doctrines, and he soon

found himself in a war of opinions, that cost him much trouble and labor. Much of the opposition which he found, grew out of an honest conviction with his opponents, that he was in serious error; but, no doubt, some of the objections to him grew out of other circumstances. He had obtained an unbounded reputation as a philosopher and Christian teacher; and his powers bore down all opposition. Heretical opinions and the followers of heretical leaders felt the force of his teachings, and many great men renounced their views when they were brought into competition with him; these became his friends and admirers, and this excited the jealousy of many, who availed themselves of his errors to destroy his influence.

Another occurrence, which turned against him his friend and patron, Dionysius, was seriously against him. He found admirers in the bishops of Jerusalem and Cæsarea; they induced him to visit them, they admired and extolled his talents, and concluded that he was in every way suited for the ministry, and ordained him a presbyter. This, Dionysius thought was an infringement upon his rights, and he not only turned against Alexander and Theoctistus,\* who ordained him, but against Origen also. While he had the authority and support of his bishop, Demetrius, he felt secure, but so sudden a change in his greatest friend, affected him to such a degree, that he became dissatisfied with his relation to the church at Alexandria.

\* Some writers call him Thodocius.

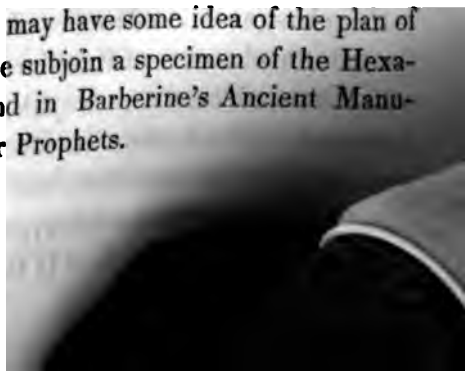
In consequence of his ordination, and his peculiar opinions, Demetrius called a synod, consisting of the presbyters of his diocese, together with some bishops of Egypt, before which Origen was cited to appear. In his youthful indiscretions he had, as we have before stated, become a eunuch, and Demetrius urged that this disqualified him for the clerical profession according to the 18th article of the *Canones Apostolici*, which forbids any eunuch from entering the ministry of the church. And notwithstanding he had himself condemned this extravagant act of his youthful enthusiasm, they deprived him of the office of public teacher in the church of Alexandria. Persecuted, as he thought he was by Demetrius, he left Alexandria and took up his abode in Cæsarea, where he hoped to be at peace ; but Demetrius pursued him even here. The prevailing spirit of the church was doubtless at this period opposed to the idealistic doctrines of Origen, and Demetrius taking advantage of this in a more numerous synod of Egyptian bishops, he having first represented the work of Origen as heretical, they excommunicated him as a heretic ; and the synod sent forth a decree against him to that effect.

His change of residence enabled him to spread through the churches of Palestine, Arabia, Phœnicia, and Achaia, a liberal church spirit, which he certainly possessed. These churches declared in his favor against the other churches, and here he collected around him students of theology, many of whom were active and efficient ministers in the churches.



In *Cæsarea*, Origen enjoyed the confidence and esteem of a lady of fortune and influence, in whose house he found a quiet abode, suited to his studies. Here he wrote his work upon martyrdom, with a view to strengthen many who were daily under the sentence of *Maximinus Tharax*; among whom were several of his personal friends. Here, too, he composed the first Polyglot that ever appeared, and one of the most herculian tasks ever performed by the perseverance and skill of an author. It consisted of a collection of all the different editions of the *Old Testament* scriptures. Taking the original Hebrew for the standard, he arranged opposite to each other, each chapter and verse. The whole work formed three parts; the first was called the *Tetrapla*, containing four different versions; the second, *Hexapla*, containing six; and the third, *Octapla*, containing eight. The first contained the Hebrew text; the second, the same text in Greek characters; the third, the Greek version of the seventy; the fourth, the version of *Aquila*; the fifth, that of *Symmachus*; the sixth, that of *Theodosius*; the seventh, a copy found at *Jericho*, called the fifth edition; and the eighth, the one which was found at *Nicopolis*, called the sixth edition.

That the reader may have some idea of the plan of this great work, we subjoin a specimen of the *Hexapla*, which is found in *Barberine's Ancient Manuscripts of the Minor Prophets*.



TETRAPLA.		AQUILA.		SYMMACHUS.		LXX.		THEODOTON.			
Ὅτι καὶ Ἰσορῆ, καὶ ἡγάκη, ἀν- των, καὶ ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου ἐ- κάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου.		Ὅτι καὶ Ἰσορῆ, καὶ ἡγακτήμιος, ἔξ Αἰγύπτου κέκληται υἱ- ός μου.		Διότι ἥρως Ἰσορῆ, ἐπὶ ἡγάκη, ἀν- των, καὶ ἔξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλισα τὰ τέκνα αὐ- του.		Ὅτι ἥρως Ἰσορῆ, ἐ- κάλεσα υἱόν μου.					
HEXAPLA.		HEB. LIT. HEB.		HEB. LIT. GR.		AQUILA.		SYMMACHUS.		LXX.	
וְיָבִי וְ לִי־יִשְׁרָאֵל וְיִשְׁרָאֵל מִ מִצְרָיִם וְיִשְׁרָאֵל בָּנָיו		זֶי עֶפְר Ἰσορῆ, οὐκ- ἀβροὺς ἀπὸ μεμνησσομένης καλέσθαι βούλεται.		Ὅτι καὶ Ἰσορῆ, καὶ ἡγάκη, ἀν- των, καὶ ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου ἐ- κάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου.		Ὅτι καὶ Ἰσορῆ, καὶ ἡγακτήμιος, ἔξ Αἰγύπτου κέκληται υἱ- ός μου.		Διότι ἥρως Ἰσορῆ, ἐπὶ ἡγάκη, ἀν- των, καὶ ἔξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλισα τὰ τέκνα αὐ- του.		Ὅτι ἥρως Ἰσορῆ, ἐ- κάλεσα υἱόν μου.	
OCTAPLA.		TEXT. HEB. LIT. HEB. .. וְיָבִי וְ ut supra.		HEB. LIT. GRÆC. זֶי עֶפְר &c.		AQUILA. Ὅτι καὶ, &c.		SYMMACHUS. Ὅτι καὶ, &c.		LXX. Διότι ἥρως, &c.	
										THEODOTON. Ὅτι ἥρως, &c.	
										EDT. V. Hierich. Desideratur.	
										EDT. VI. Nicopol. Desideratur.	

The translation then extant in the church was the Alexandrian version of the Old Testament, the manuscripts of which differed greatly from each other, and contained many Jewish legends which were looked upon by many Christians as inspired. Origen's object was to correct the text of this version, and improve the version itself, by a comparison with other translations and the Hebrew original. He knew the importance of a knowledge of the original text, as the Jews in their disputations with Christians had often ridiculed their ignorance, in quoting from the Alexandrian version what could not be found in the Hebrew, or in not knowing many texts which were not found in the Alexandrian version. The three parts are shown in the specimen; the first, or Octapla, containing eight; the second, or Hexapla, containing six; and the third, or Tetrapla, containing four. The text is, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

The diligence of Origen, in collecting the different versions of the Old Testament, and the different manuscripts of the Alexandrian version, is remarkable. He discovered at Jericho, in a barrel, while rummaging among some old books, some translations of parts of the Old Testament to be found no where else. His protectress and friend, who lodged him, had inherited the writings of Symmachus, an Ebionite, who lived about the beginning of the third century, among whose productions was a commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, *Εὐαγγέλιον κατ' Ἑβραίων*, and a translation

made by him of the Old Testament ; and in his frequent journeys, he was always diligently employed to discover something of value, to improve his book.

This was a ponderous work, and so expensive that it was beyond the reach of many who could appreciate it, or add to its circulation by pointing out its real merits. Some of the versions were afterwards subtracted from the work ; but even then it obtained a very limited circulation. After the death of Origen there was but one perfect copy left, and that was lost for more than half a century. According to Mr. Horne, the only copy in existence was burnt in one of the libraries of Tyre, by the Arabs in their desolating wars of A. D. 653.

To give some idea of this great monument of literary enterprise, Montfaucon has compiled the few remaining fragments of the work, and they amount to two folio volumes, but the original is supposed by competent judges, to contain twenty times as much ; making forty folio volumes. No wonder he was called *Adamantinus* ; for in view of this immense work, and the many other productions of his pen, we have to say with Eusebius: "To give any thing like a minute account of them, would require a separate and distinct volume !"

From Cæsarea, he seems to have taken another journey to Athens. Here we find him finishing his commentaries upon Ezekiel,\* and writing five books upon the Canticles, the whole of which he completed after his return to Cæsarea. Some suppose that this

\* Euseb. Hist. 1, vi, Eccl. c. 32.

journey was taken with a view of going to Nicomedia to visit his friend Ambrosius ; who had been reclaimed from the errors of Valentinus, by his instrumentality, and who had been of great service to him in his biblical researches. But whatever object he had in view, he certainly was indefatigable in his labors ; for, besides the works above alluded to, he wrote an answer to a letter which he had received from Julius Africanus, upon the history of Susanna. Africanus maintained that this was a spurious production, and Origen endeavored to show the genuineness and authenticity of that story ; but while he displayed great ingenuity in maintaining his views, he evidently failed to overturn the positions of Africanus.

It was about this time that the bishop of Bostra, Beryllus, was arraigned for his dangerous errors. The bishops of the surrounding country were about to meet in synod, to consider his opinions, and Origen was urged to be present upon the occasion, and take part in the deliberations. To this he consented, and it resulted as we have heretofore stated. After this Origen returned to Palestine, and although advanced in years, retained all the vigor and industry of his former days. His friend, Ambrosius, now urged him to undertake a reply to the work of Celsus, entitled, "The True Discourse," in which that writer had attacked Christianity with all the wit, reflection, plausible reasoning, and virulent asperity, of which a man of the most finished abilities was capable. Origen

consented, and in eight books, which remain entire, he has left behind him a work which speaks out the power of thought, and cogency of reasoning, of a cultivated mind deeply imbued with the spirit of religion. This work was written in the days of his more mature judgment and greatest piety, and contains less objectionable matter than any of his writings. It is a powerful refutation of the vile and sophistical arguments of an inveterate infidel.

In his doctrinal views, Origen was principally directed by Gnosticism and Platonism; and by the allegorical method he employed in interpreting the scriptures, he attempted to establish an admixture of heathenism and revelation, for Christianity. His rule of interpretation was, that when the literal sense of scripture was not clear, and not consistent with his tenets, the words were to be understood in a mystical sense; this enabled him to incorporate what he pleased, however fanciful, into the doctrines of the Christian religion.

His emanation scheme, mentioned before, led him to a peculiar view of the origin of evil; he supposed that the differences in intelligent creatures, was deduced *from moral freedom*. He conceived God to be the original source of a spiritual world, rendered blessed by communion with himself, and this spiritual world alike in every member. That there was no difference in the measure of blessing received or the power possessed by every being, and that all the difference which exists, owes its origin to the difference

in the direction originally given to the moral action of the will. Thus making the original creation of beings, altogether alike in every particular, only numerically distinct and separate. Being good, they remain so, only by means of communion with the Logos, who is the original source of good. But he conceived, as soon as there exists a desire, in any being gifted with reason, to be independent of this source of good, then evil is certain to exist. This estrangement of the spirit from God, destroyed the original unity, and brought about a destruction of harmony, which can only be restored by the process of purification and improvement.

The soul of the world being the power and wisdom of God, Origen conceived that the moral differences and disorders, were to be subjected to a law, which, emanating from the wisdom, and rendered operative by the power of God, would penetrate and resuscitate the whole, until a final restoration would take place, to the original condition of unity.

It is remarkable, that in the multifarious errors of the church teachers of this school, that a single point was left in their anthropology, or system, on which to engraft the necessity of a Saviour; but the *Redeemer* found a place as the very essence of Christianity, and however they wandered in the labyrinths of speculation, they always made human nature to need that Redeemer. Thus, Origen made the soul, through the faithful direction of its will towards the Logos, and by an affection for him, through which the union had

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always in some sense been kept up, finally to be altogether one with him.

Origen was the first of these teachers who deduced the doctrine of *a proper and reasonable soul in Christ*. He regarded Christ as possessed of the noblest soul, appearing to man in the noblest body, as the purest and most fit instrument of the spirit; that Christ reveals himself in different ways according to their capacity; so that to some he appeared in the form of a servant, because they could not see him in an ennobled form.

He worked his views into systematic form, and gave such importance to the soul of Christ, that it was brought before a synod, held A. D. 244, and there settled as a doctrine of the church.

He considered the objects of the appearance and operations of Christ upon earth to be, to set forth the divine operations of the Spirit, for the healing and purification of fallen beings, and to aid man, who was unable to raise himself up to an intuitive perception of the spiritual operations of the everlasting Logos. In reference to the relation of the passion of Christ to sin, he says, "He took upon himself our transgressions, and bore our diseases, the transgressions of the soul and the diseases of the inner man; on account of the transgressions and diseases which he bore away from us, he said his soul was troubled and disturbed." Origen thought that the suffering of a holy being for the guilty, had a kind of magic power which crippled evil spirits and liberated the guilty from their influ-



ence. But he drew a very proper *connection* between redemption and sanctification, and between faith and works.

Were it not for the visionary revellings in which he delighted, in a vain and deceitful philosophy which mingled itself with all his notions—had he taken the word of God only—he would have been a teacher, with his influence and learning, of great advantage to the church; as it was, he was the instrument of spreading abroad in the church, doctrines for which there is no warrant in the word of God; and, raising up teachers of speculations like his own, to follow in his course.

Origen busied himself to the end of his days in theological labors; and so great was his reputation, that when sixty years of age, short-hand writers were employed to take down his sermons. Synods called upon him to counsel them in matters of difficulty; and bishops, in weighty matters, called him to their aid. He was the first who introduced the custom of selecting a text, or portion of scripture, upon which to discourse in public assemblies.

Among the Christians of Arabia, a controversy existed in relation to the natural immortality of the soul; some supposing that immortality was a gift of the grace of God, that the soul died with the body, and was raised again with the body, only at the general resurrection. A great synod was called to settle this controversy, and when they were unable to agree, Origen was invited to attend; and such was his influ-

ence, that he prevailed over the opposers of the natural immortality of the soul, until they acknowledged their error, and all controversy upon the subject was brought to an end.

Towards the close of his life, his individual opinions were regarded as heretical, and opposed to the more evangelical doctrines of the gospel ; but he seemed himself to study to show that he was ready to renounce every thing, even life itself, for the sake of his Lord. In the Decian persecution, which was particularly directed against the leaders of the Christian church—as those most dangerous to the state, in propagating the peculiar doctrines of Christianity—Origen was most active, and became the object of fanatical cruelty. He was thrown into a dungeon, and his persecutors endeavored to triumph over the weakness of his age, by gradually increasing torments. But he witnessed a good confession ; and after great suffering, in which he was supported by faith, he was released from confinement. But the sufferings which he underwent had shattered his health so that his death soon ensued.



## CHAPTER XXX.

### ORIGEN'S PUPILS.

Succeeded by Heraclas—Gregory, alias Theodocius—His Parentage—His Studies—Joins Origen's School at Cæsarea—Panegyric on Origen—Condition of Neocæsarea—Become their Bishop—How made Such—Condition of his Diocese—His Confession of Faith—His Miracles—Their Influence upon Neocæsarea—By whom Believed—His Success—Persecutions—Gregory in Council—His Works—Dionysius Succeeds Heraclas—How Distinguished—He Reads Heathen Works—Theognostus—Origenites—Hieracas how Supported—His Doctrines—Methodius—Pamphilus—The Bible Improved and Circulated—The Master and Friend of Eusebius—The Extent of Origen's Influence.

So extensive were the labors of Origen during his life, that both his writings and pupils kept alive his peculiar opinions long after his death. He was succeeded in his school by Heraclas, one of his most distinguished disciples, who became successor to Demetrius, the personal enemy of Origen. Heraclas was especially the friend of his master, holding him in great esteem to the day of his death. And such was the influence which his friends exerted, that his opinions were spread from Palestine to Cappadocia and Pontus, and while many rejected his errors, all admired his industry and extensive learning.

GREGORY, *ὁ θαυματουργός*, the *wonderworker*, was the

pupil of Origen for eight years. His original name was Theodocius, and he was born at Neocæsarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia. He was a heathen, but his family was of the higher order of society, and of considerable wealth. His father was a thorough heathen, but he died when Gregory was fourteen years of age, and his studies were not so much confined to an exclusively heathen training after that event as before. He was bred to the profession of the law, and in order to complete his education he visited Alexandria, where he spent some time to great advantage. From this city he went to Athens, where Socrates tells us he studied for some time.\* But the fame of Origen, who was now at Cæsarea in Palestine, reached him, and, in company with Firmilian, who afterwards became bishop of Cæsarea, he joined his school. Here he studied Christianity and renounced his heathenism. At the expiration of his studies in Cæsarea, he delivered an eloquent panegyric upon Origen, which so exhibited his powers, that every one listened with amazement. And after his departure, Origen wrote a very encouraging letter to him, extolling his abilities and urging their constant employment in the work of spreading the Christian religion.†

After his return to Neocæsarea, he found it overgrown with idolatry and superstition, and Christianity scarcely known. The good bishop of Amasea, a

\* Hist. Eccl. 1, iv. c. 27.

† Extract in Orig. Philocal c. 13.

neighboring city, learning that he had returned, desired an interview with him, that he might induce him to take upon him the work and office of the ministry ; but not meeting with the opportunity, he wrote to him a letter in which he sets him apart as the bishop of Neocæsarea, without any farther ceremony. Gregory, receiving this as sufficient authority, set immediately about the work. There being only seventeen professing Christians in the place, he had to found a church, before he could govern it ; and he consequently went to work in good earnest. He framed a confession of faith, about which a fabulous story is related,\* in reference to the appearance of St. John and the virgin Mary, who instructed him, in a vision of the night, what to write down as the creed of the Christian church ; but like many other fabulous things circulated of Gregory, it is unworthy of credence. Its value is mainly in setting forth the foundation of the doctrines which he held, and which may very justly be considered a digest of his views of that part of the Christian system, which teaches the nature and character of God.

It is very confidently asserted that Gregory had the power of working miracles, and that the devils themselves were at times subjected to him. An instance of this is related of him. When returning home from the wilderness on one occasion, with some companions who had accompanied him, he was overtaken by a terrible storm, and night coming on, they were

\* Cave's Lives, v. 1, p. 402, Ox. ed.

obliged to seek shelter in a heathen temple which was famous in that region for oracles and divinations. Here they spent the night in prayer and praise to God. In the morning the priest of the place came to offer his daily oblations to the demon of the temple ; but he made his usual lustrations and sacrifices in vain. The demon was silenced ; no answer came as usual, and all importunities and invocations were in vain. The priest finding that the occupants were the cause of this unusual occurrence, threatened to apply to the magistrates for their arrest ; but finding that Gregory had even his demon in subjection to him, he was awed, and sought a clearer demonstration of the truth of his power by asking him to permit the demon to reappear. Gregory, therefore, wrote upon a piece of paper, "Gregory to Satan, enter." This the priest had no sooner laid upon the altar, and the usual incense and oblations made, than the demon appeared as he was wont to do.\*

This occurrence is said to have produced such an influence over the people of Neocæsarea, that they flocked to hear him, and from morning until evening he discoursed most eloquently of Christ and the resurrection. Many were now converted to the faith, Christianity spread among the people ; and a spacious church was erected in the city, which stood for many years.

Gregory Nyssen reports other miraculous things of him, such as sending a plague upon the people, dry-

\* *Greg. Nyss. in vit. Greg. Thum. vol. iii, p. 548.*

ing up the water of a lake, restraining the violence of a flood, and many other things equally miraculous. These reports gained credence and were confidently believed by Basil, and the Gregory to which we have referred; but the reader will find upon examination, that these writers learned these legends from their grandmother, who was an aged and superstitious woman; and they are of very doubtful authenticity. It is certain, however, that they were confidently believed by many learned men, and created for Gregory the title of Thaumaturgus.

Such was the success which attended his labors, that Decius became acquainted with it, and ordered a most severe and bitter persecution, which, about the year 250, spread through Pontus and Cappadocia, and sorely beset the people of his charge in Neocæsarea, and scattered ministers and people to the deserts and secret places.

We find Gregory in the council held at Antioch, upon the heresy of Paul of Somosata, A. D. 264, in which he took a most distinguished part, and he has left behind evidence of his ability as a theological writer. Hierom enumerates his works,\* thus: A Eucharistical Panegyric to Origen, Metaphrases upon Ecclesiastes, several Epistles, and the creed to which we have alluded. His works are nearly all extant, but some of them are so strangely interpolated that they are rendered unfit for any reliance to be placed upon them.

\* De Scrip. in Theodor.



Dionysius who succeeded Heraclas in the school at Alexandria, was another of Origen's pupils, who always retained a remarkable veneration for his instructor; and the esteem was reciprocated, for when Dionysius was cast into prison during the Decian persecution, Origen wrote him a most affectionate letter, full of consolation, and particularly appropriate in the hour of his severe trial. Among the teachers of the Alexandrian school, Dionysius was distinguished by a spirit of Christian meekness and simplicity. He was led to the truth by a most extensive examination of all the different systems; and continued to examine, after his conversion, the writings of heretics, rejecting those things which he found in them, after a proper investigation, to be inconsistent; being, as he supposed, placed in a position of Christian knowledge and experience to confute them. He was, on one occasion, warned against the danger of these heretical works, but he declared that he was instructed by a heavenly vision to "read all that fell into his hands, that he might be able to judge and examine every thing, because it had been to him a source of faith from the beginning." In a letter upon this subject, he speaks of this matter with such simplicity, and betrays so little design, that it could hardly be classed with the lax principles of the Alexandrian school, although it is ranked among what is termed the *fraus pia* of these church teachers.

The peculiar doctrines of Origen are recognised in the last period of the third century, when Theognos-

tus distinguished himself as a teacher of the Alexandrian church. In Egypt, too, there were assemblies of ascetics, of the *Origenistic* schools, who lived in the country, and who gave rise to the monks of after times. These defended the opinions of Origen against the *Anthropomorphites*, who held the realistic doctrines, and opposed the idealistic mode of Origen. It was from this Origenistic party that Hieracas sprang, the leader of an ascetic party, who lived in the neighborhood of the town, Leontopolis, in Egypt.

According to the practice generally followed, Hieracas gained his livelihood, and the means of his benevolence, by the art of penmanship; and as he was skilled in the Greek and Coptic languages, he had much employment. He was also acquainted with the literature of his day; and wrote a commentary on the bible, in Greek, in which are mingled with the precious truths of that book, many things quite foreign to them. Like Origen, he was addicted to the allegorizing mode of interpretation. He denied the existence of a material paradise, and considered it the symbol of a higher world of spirits; and he taught the theory, that the heavenly spirit sank down by the inclination of earthly matter, as a reason for despising the material body, and of placing it under the discipline of a Christian morality. His peculiar opinions led to some singular notions in reference to the resurrection of the body. His views of Christian perfection were similar to those of Tatian, and the ascetics of that school, and he laid great stress upon the principle,

“that participation in the kingdom of heaven, being only the recompense of a combat, he who has never fought, cannot attain the victor’s crown.”

We have heretofore represented Methodius as an opponent of Origen, but he was not always such ; for having been convinced of his error, by the powerful talents of Origen, he became an admirer, and in his writings\* revoked all that he had said against him. He held many views congenial to Origen’s opinions ; was by no means an adherent of the church doctrines, as such, but wandered in the theosophic speculation, for which the Alexandrian teachers were proverbial. He possessed a strong affection for Origen’s mode of interpreting the bible ; and favored the pre-existence of souls. He was a writer of some standing, and his most important work was upon celibacy, entitled, *The Feast of the Ten Virgins*.

Pamphilus was a defender of Origen’s doctrines in Cæsarea, of Palestine. The labors of this writer contributed greatly to the promotion of theological knowledge as late as the fourth century ; and he seems to have been a man of learning, especially in theology. He founded a library of ecclesiastical works ; and a school for the study of the scriptures, in which more attention was given to an exclusively biblical training than any of the schools of that day. His labors as a biblical scholar contributed greatly to the improvement of the manuscripts of the bible ; and he

\* Socra. Lib. iv. c. 13.

circulated the scriptures among the people, to an extent that shows how important he conceived it to be, to place the bible in the hands of every one that could read. The great Eusebius came forth from this school, and owed to Pamphilus almost every thing; as he was to him a father, instructor and friend. When Pamphilus was a prisoner in the persecution of Diocletian, A. D. 309, he wrote a work in the defence of Origen, in which labor he was aided by Eusebius; and after his martyrdom, Eusebius added to it, or completed the work by the addition of another book. The work was an apology, addressed to the confessors who were banished, or laboring as slaves in the mines; the design of which was to disabuse the minds of many, who condemned all who even busied themselves with the writings of Origen.

Pamphilus, like Origen, cherished a speculative spirit in doctrinal matters; yet he adhered closely to the bible, loved to study it, and treated with great care the *letter* of the scriptures, while he indulged in a licentious method of allegorizing. He was much esteemed during his life, and a martyr, whose firmness and faith were lauded by the church in his day.

It would be impossible to show the extent of Origen's influence, either upon the church or upon the formation of individual character. He certainly originated a spirit, which grew after he was gone, of the most ardent desire to investigate all sacred learning. The school at Antioch, which developed such research of the sacred text and biblical interpretation

in the fourth century, received no doubt its germ from this influence ; and all the sound herminutical and exegetical direction which was given to the Antiochian and Alexandrian teachers, came through the same influence.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### PROSPEROUS AND ADVERSE CONDITION.

The Influence of Origen with the Emperor—Earthquakes—Their Effects—Philip the Arabian—Origen on the Condition of the Church—Prediction of Persecution—Decius Ascends the Throne—Persecution Revived—Gallianus Succeeds—Condition of the Church—The Christian Religion Receives a Legal Existence—Diocletian, his Course—His Edict—Efforts made to Increase the Persecution—Their Success—The Bible an Object of Persecution—How Treated—Persecutions in Numidia—The Palace set on Fire—The Fourth Edict—The Favorable Change—End of Persecution in the Roman Empire.

DURING the life of Origen, the throne of the empire itself was influenced by his life and conversation. In the reign of Septimus Severus, who succeeded Heliogabalus, Origen had unbounded influence over Julia Mammæa, the mother of the emperor, and so influenced the emperor himself, that he seemed to revere every thing like religion. Such was his respect for the Christian religion, that in his *lararium*, or private chapel, among the various busts of the gods, he had erected one of Jesus Christ. He gave the world to understand that Christianity was among the lawful religions of the empire; he new-modelled the appointments of the state officers, and gave a lot

of ground in the city of Rome, to the church for its benefit.

Still Christianity was not admitted among the *religiones licitæ*, and all that was gained, through this means, was repose for the church.

But that repose was temporary, for when the rude Thracian, Maximinus, raised himself to the throne, persecutions increased; and, as Severus had raised many of the teachers of the church to places of influence and favor, he especially directed his hatred to them.

Many districts were visited at this time with remarkable earthquakes which desolated whole sections; such, for instance, was the case in Cappadocia, and Pontus. This enraged the fury of the people against Christians, and they had to fly into other districts, or fall under the hand of cruelty and death.

But when a more tranquil season came, under Philip the Arabian, the church prospered greatly. Eusebius calls Philip the first Christian emperor, and it is said of him, that he went on one occasion to join a Christian congregation; but the bishop of the church met him at the door, and refused him admission, assigning as a reason, the murder of his predecessor, Gordianus; and at the same time he informed him that he could not be admitted until he had submitted to the penance of the church.

It was in this reign that Origen wrote his answer to Celsus, in which he gives us to understand that the church was in a very favorable condition; but in this

season of repose, he also wrote upon the subject of persecution, and the present, past, and future condition of the church. In regard to the earlier persecutions through which the church had passed, he says,\* "Although the Christians, who were commanded not to defend themselves by violence against their enemies, complied with this tender and humane precept; yet that which they never could have obtained, however powerful they might have been, had they been permitted to go to war, that they have received from God, who has always fought for them, and who has, at times, imposed tranquillity on those who opposed them, and would extirpate their religion: for, as a kind of warning and memorial to them, that when they saw some few contend for their religion, they might become stronger and despise death. A few (so few that they may be easily numbered) have at times suffered death for the Christian religion, and thus God has prevented a war of extermination against the whole body of Christians; for he wished their continuance, he wished that the whole earth should be filled with their wholesome and most holy doctrine. And, on the other hand, that the weaker brethren might take breath, and be relieved from the fear of death. God cared for the believers, by so scattering, through his own mere will, all assaults upon them, that neither emperor, nor governor, nor the multitude should prevail against them further."

\* Lib. iii, p. 119.



But of the present condition of the church, he says, "But since it was God who willed the doctrine that Jesus should become a blessing to the heathen, all the assaults of men against other Christians have been brought to shame, and the more the emperors, the governors, and the multitude, have sought to oppress the Christians, the more powerful have these latter become."\* He informs us that the Christian religion had found favor with the rich, with many officers of the government, and that persons of rank and influence had embraced Christianity. That the Christian minister found respect and favor from many, while there still existed a deeply rooted impression unfavorable to his success. In reference to the future condition and prospects of the church, he predicted that sore persecutions would arise because "the downfall of the state religion, and the irresistible propagation of Christianity, were bringing disaster on the Roman empire" in the opinion of many, "and would sooner or later again revive the flames of persecution."

It is remarkable, that while he was thus writing in Cæsarea, Eusebius tells us, that in Alexandria, an enthusiast was imposing upon the people, by pretended revelations from the gods, and greatly excited them, so that the flames of persecution were revived again in that quarter. But Decius Trajanus succeeded Philip, and being passionately devoted to Paganism, he looked upon Christianity with jealousy

\* Lib. vii, p. 359.

and hatred. The long peace and prosperity of the church, had created a soporific influence on many of the members, and a worldly-mindedness had seized both laity and clergy ; so that the renewal of these sore and relentless trials came, when many were unprepared to breast the storm ; and they, consequently, made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

The emperor Gallienus, soon after his accession, restored to Christians their rights, and recognised the church, as a legally existing body ; but before this emperor had obtained undisputed possession, in the east, persecutions were continued under the old laws. Eusebius relates an instance of this, of Marcius, a Christian soldier, who was about to be promoted, but who was charged by the next to him, who had a promise of the office, with being a Christian. And according to the old laws, no individual could be promoted to a military office, who was a Christian. He was granted some delay, during which time, he was conducted to the church by his bishop, who pointed to his sword and then to the gospels, which he laid before him, while he said to him, "Choose between the military rank and the gospel !" Without any hesitation, he laid hold upon the latter, lifting up his right hand, "Now hold fast on God," said the bishop, "And mayest thou obtain what thou hast chosen, depart in peace." The soldier made a most courageous confession, and was beheaded.

But the law of the new emperor, was of general application, finally, and was fraught with the most

beneficial consequences to the church. The Christian religion had now received a legal existence ; it had become a "religio licita," and the governors were fearful of laying hands upon a corporate body. For forty years, it remained in a state of repose. Christianity increased among all classes, and the simple houses of worship now gave place to splendid churches. Christians were found among the officers of the government, and received important places near the person of the emperors.

Diocletian was, during the greater part of his reign, deterred through circumstances of a political and prudential character, from persecuting the church ; but he had been often urged to crush the destroyer of Roman glory, and establish the old heathen "sacra ;" to which he was very much devoted. An opportunity was soon found for him to overcome the objections to a persecution. There were many Christians in the army, both in the higher and lower ranks ; they had not heretofore been forced to sacrifice, or do any thing that was contrary to their consciences ; but on the festival "dies natalis Cæsaris," in the year 298, an order was issued that every soldier should sacrifice ; upon which many resigned and abandoned the service. A few only were sentenced to death, and in these cases there were other charges to cover the real design. Under this state of things, one Marcellus, a centurion, arose from the table at a banquet, according to heathen custom in honor of the emperor, and throwing down the insignia of office,

his sword and belt, he declared, "From this moment I cease to serve your emperors as a soldier. I despise praying to your gods of wood and stone, deaf and dumb idols. If the condition of a soldier requires this, that one must offer sacrifices to the gods and to the emperor, I throw away my wand and my belt, I renounce the colors, and I am a soldier no more." He was sentenced to death for contempt of office, and publicly declaiming against the gods and the emperor.

In the winter of 303, Galerius, the son-in-law of the emperor, and Hierocles, at Nicomedia, with several heathens of distinction, succeeded in obtaining an edict against the Christians. The time fixed upon for putting this law into effect, was the 2d February, on which day a great heathen festival was to take place. The churches were broken open, copies of the bible burned, and the emperor's edict was posted up in the following language: "The assemblies of Christians, for divine service, shall be forbidden, the Christian churches pulled down, and all copies of the bible burnt; those who have offices of honor and dignity, shall lose them unless they abjure. In the judicial investigations, the torture may be applied against all Christians, of any rank whatsoever, and the Christians of lower ranks shall lose their rights as citizens and freemen, and Christian slaves, as long as they continue Christians, shall be incapable of receiving their freedom."

Emperors had conceived the policy of separating the clergy from the laity, and had exerted themselves

unsuccessfully, because the source of their teaching, the bible, remained for others; and teachers multiplied in the face of the most severe edicts; and history bears testimony to the fact, that the most effectual way to destroy Christianity, is to cut off this source of instruction from the church. Separated from this, the truth receives an admixture of error, and soon becomes erased from the fleshly tables of the heart. But with the word of God, the church is recalled to its purity. The enemies of Christianity, at this time, were shrewd and determined. Hierocles, to cover the shame of the persecution, wrote an essay against Christianity, while Christians were suffering from torture, prison, and the axe of the executioner. And many heathens were disgusted at the baseness of this sophist, in so ungenerous a deed.

When the edict was first published, such was the indignation of some Christians, that they were carried beyond the limits which the gospel prescribes. A Christian of respectable condition tore down the edict, and tearing it to pieces, cried out in the hearing of the people, "Behold, these are new victories over the Goths and Sarmatians, which are posted up! The emperor treats the Christians, his own subjects, no otherwise than if they were the conquered Goths and Sarmatians!"

But the authorities now directed their efforts against the word of God, churches and private houses were searched, and copies of the scriptures, with all other Christian writings, were burned. Bishop Mensurius,

of Carthage, used the precaution to take all the copies of God's word out of the church, to his own house, but he left the writings of heretics, with which the authorities seemed satisfied. Some senators, however, complained of the imposition to the proconsul, who, being willing to suffer the deception, if such it may be called, took no further notice of it.

Notwithstanding the edict, Christians continued, as circumstances would allow, to meet together. In a country town of Numedia, they were in the habit of meeting together at the house of a person who held the office of reader. Here, on one occasion, they were celebrating the Lord's Supper, when they were seized and taken to Carthage, to the tribunal of the proconsul; they were put to the torture, and in the midst of great suffering, one of them cried out, "Ye sin, unhappy men, ye sin; ye punish the innocent; we are no murderers, we have deceived no man; God have mercy on thee. I thank thee, God! and give me strength to suffer for thy name! Free thy servant from the slavery of this world. I thank thee, and yet I am unable to thank thee." The proconsul said to him, "Ye ought to have obeyed the imperial edict;" to which he replied, "I now revere only the law of God, which I have learned. For this law will I die, in this law do I become perfect, and besides it there is no other." Among the prisoners, was a little girl, whose father and brothers were heathens, with a boy of twelve or thirteen years of age. The brothers of the girl endeavored to make

the impression that she was of unsound mind, but she declared that Christianity was her firm and steady conviction; that she was a Christian, and that her brothers were those who did the will of God. The proconsul endeavored to frighten the boy; and he therefore told him that he should be tortured, if he did not abjure his religion; he replied, "Do what you will, I am a Christian!"

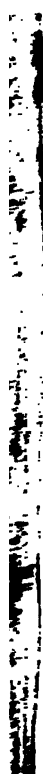
The palace of the emperor was at this time set on fire by some incendiary, and it was charged upon Christians: they were said to be secretly seditious and enemies to the state; and persecutions consequently increased. The prisons were filled with the clergy, and the strictest watch kept over the people. Every invention was employed to prevent the collection of Christians, and their worship was broken up, wherever they were found together, and the scriptures were taken from them, whenever they could be found.

The fourth edict ordered that all Christians should be compelled to offer sacrifices to the gods. A general triumph was talked of over Christianity, and measures seemed to threaten a destruction of the faith, but God turns aside the purposes of man, and his care is always evident to preserve his church, so that the gates of hell itself shall not prevail against it.

Many changes occurred before the bloody struggle ended; but it finally occurred that Galerius himself issued an edict, that gave to the church a peaceable existence in the Roman empire.









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